



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

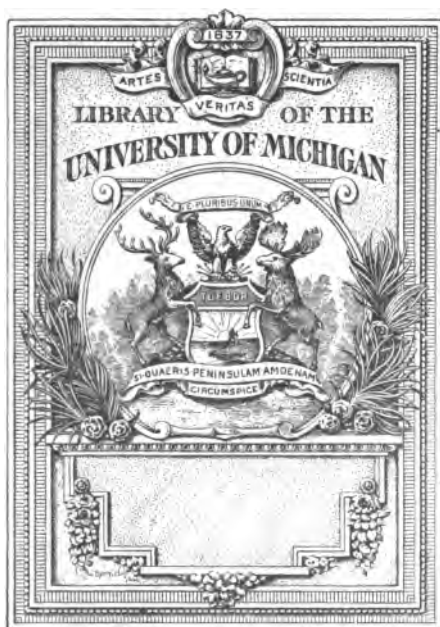
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A

935,472

THE  
STATES GENERAL  
ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

CHAUTAUQUA  
HOME READING SERIES



848

E65h

-V27







THE OATH IN THE TENNIS COURT  
From the painting by Couder in the Museum at Versailles

# The States General

(From "The Story of a Peasant")

BY  
ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

TRANSLATED BY  
LOUIS E. VAN NORMAN



**The Chautauqua Press**  
CHAUTAUQUA, N. Y.  
MCMIV



**COPYRIGHT, 1904,**  
**BY**  
**THE POPULAR EDUCATION PUBLISHING**  
**COMPANY**

**The Lakeside Press**  
**R. R. DONNELLEY & SONS COMPANY**  
**CHICAGO**

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE LOAD ON THE PEASANT'S BACK . . .	1
II. THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY . . .	12
III. THE LITTLE CALVINIST PEDDLER . . .	27
IV. MASTER JEAN'S POTATO HARVEST . . .	38
V. THE ACCOUNTING OF NECKER . . .	58
VI. NICOLAS BRINGS THE FAMILY TO GRIEF . .	80
VII. THE DEFICIT CONTINUES TO GROW . . .	94
VIII. A LETTER FROM NICHOLAS . . .	111
IX. CHAUVEL HAS A NARROW ESCAPE . . .	120
X. MASTER JEAN AND CHAUVEL ARE NOMINATED	129
XI. THE ELECTIONS . . .	138
XII. MICHEL FINDS HE HAS A HEART . . .	149
XIII. MICHEL MENDS A SPADE . . .	165
XIV. THE FEAST AT LEROUX'S . . .	175
XV. MARGUERITE'S COURAGE . . .	188
XVI. MARGUERITE'S TRIUMPH . . .	200
XVII. THE ASSEMBLING OF THE STATES GENERAL	214



## FOREWORD

"The States General" is one of a series of historical novels which have attained wide popularity in France and Germany. The authors, Messrs. Emile Erckmann (1822-1899) and Alexander Chatrian (1826-1890), grew up in the border province of Lorraine, Erckmann at Pfalsburg and Chatrian at Soldatenthal in the same district. Erckmann began the study of law and Chatrian the profession of teaching, but both were drawn to literature, and their chance meeting in 1847 led to a friendship which lasted more than forty years. Their earliest writings appeared in 1848 as *feuilletons* in a new publication, the *Democrate du Rhin*, but the public showed indifference to their talents, and the two authors had to resort to other means of support, until in 1859 the publication of "L'Illustre Docteur Matheus" in the *Revue Nouvelle* brought them their first real success. This was followed by a long list of novels, the most widely known of which are "The Story of a Conscript of 1813," "Friend Fritz," "Madame Therese," "Waterloo," and "The Story of a Peasant," in four parts. "The States General" (1789), here translated for American readers, is the first volume of "The Story of a Peasant." It gives from the French peasant's point of view a marvelously thrilling and vivid picture of otherwise almost inconceivable conditions precedent to the French Revolution. Its value as an aid to a correct comprehension of that social upheaval will be appreciated by

every reader. The other three volumes of "The Story of a Peasant" are entitled: "The Country in Danger, 1792," "Year One of the Republic, 1793," and "Citizen Bonaparte, 1794-1815." After the war of 1871, and the German annexation of Alsace, they wrote a stirring volume, which excited much comment, "The Story of the Plébiscite by One of the 7,500,000 Who Voted Yes." Their published works all told include some thirty-seven titles, several of which are plays of no slight merit. The novel "Friend Fritz" was successfully dramatized in 1871. Another play, "Le Juif Polonais," has become familiar in England and America through its presentation by Sir Henry Irving under the title of "The Bells." Messrs. Erckmann and Chatrian dissolved their literary partnership in 1889, and Chatrian's death occurred a year later.

The translator of "The States General" has endeavored to preserve, as far as possible, the flavor of the original peasant French terms, adding explanatory footnotes when the meaning is not sufficiently clear to English-speaking readers.

# THE STATES GENERAL

---

## CHAPTER I

### THE LOAD ON THE PEASANT'S BACK

Many have recounted the history of the great Revolution of 1789, of the people and bourgeois against the nobles. These were learned men, men of intellect who looked at things from above. I am but an old peasant, and I will speak of our own affairs only. The main thing is to attend to one's own affairs, for what one has himself seen he knows well, and should profit thereby.

You must know that before the Revolution, the seigniory of Phalsbourg comprised five villages: Vilschberg, Mittelbronn, Lutzelbourg, Hultenhausen, and Hazelbourg; that the people of Vilschberg and Hazelbourg were free, but that the inhabitants of the other villages, women as well as men, were serfs, and could not go beyond the boundaries of the seigniory, or absent themselves in any way without the permission of the prevost.

The prevost dispensed justice at the town hall of the commune. He had the right to judge people and things; he carried a sword, and even condemned to the gibbet.

It was under the archway of the municipal building, where the police station now is, that the accused were put to the question when they did not confess their crimes. The sergeant of the prevost and the executioner put them

to so much pain that one could hear their cries way out on the square. On market day a gibbet would be erected under the old elm trees and the executioner would then hang them, weighting them down with his feet on their shoulders. One must have had a hardened heart to even think of committing an evil deed in those days.

Phalsbourg had a very high octroi duty; that is, each wagon-load of merchandise, such as cloth, wool, or other such goods, paid a florin at the toll-gate. Each wagon-load of posts, boards, staves, and other building materials, six gros de Lorraine; \* each wagon-load of rich stuffs, as velvets, silks, and broadcloth, thirty gros; a one-horse load, two gros; a pannier full of goods, a half gros; a hand-cart of fish, a half florin; a hand-cart of eggs, butter, or cheese, six gros; each measure of salt, six gros; each rezal of rye or wheat, three gros; a rezal of barley or oats, two gros; a hundredweight of iron, two gros; an ox or a cow, six pfennigs; a calf, a hog, or a sheep, two pfennigs, etc.

Therefore, the people of Phalsbourg and its vicinity could not eat, drink, or clothe themselves without paying a round sum to the dukes of Lorraine.

Then came the general tax; that is to say, every hotel-, inn-, and tavern-keeper of Phalsbourg or one of its dependent villages was obliged to pay to His Highness six pots of wine or beer for each measure stored or sold. They also levied for His Highness on transactions and sales; for example, on the sale of houses or inheritances, five florins on the hundred. Then on the measuring of grain there was the tax, which means that all the grain,

\* A coin, now obsolete, worth from one-half to three American cents.

wheat, rye, barley, oats, which was sold in the market owed His Highness one cent on each measure. Then, at all the county fairs—of which there were three every year, one on St. Mathias's day, the second on St. Modesty's day, and the third on St. Gall's day—two sergeants would visit the booths and tax each for the benefit of His Highness.

Then came the town scales. For a hundredweight of wool, flour, or other merchandise, one cent. Then the fines, which were adjusted by the prevost, but the councilmen of His Highness always judged and assessed them to his advantage. Then came the right of pasturage, the right to cut wood in the forest, the right to weave, to thresh grain, and card wool and cotton. And then the big tithes, which were two-thirds for His Highness and one-third for the Church; and the small tithes paid in wheat for the Church alone, but which His Highness finally appropriated, because he loved himself better than he loved the Church.


And now, if one would understand how it was that so many good people found themselves under the fist of His Highness, and his prevosts, bailiffs, seneschals, and councilmen, one must recall that, some two hundred years before this great destitution (*misère*) one Georges-Jean, Count Palatine, Duke of Bavaria, and Count of Weldentz, who owned immense forests in our country, by grace of the emperors of Germany, but who could not draw a single sou from them, because there were no people living there, no roads to transport the lumber, and no rivers to float the logs upon, began to spread broadcast, in Alsace, Lorraine, and the Palatinate, that "all those who were willing to work had only to come to these woods, that he



would give them land, and that they would live on plenty; that he, Jean of Weldentz, was doing this for the glory of God; that Phalsbourg, being the highway between France, Lorraine, Vestrich, and Alsace, the artisans and tradesmen, wheelwrights, smiths, coopers, and shoemakers, would find a great market for their wares, as well as locksmiths, gun-makers, upholsterers, inn-keepers, and other industrious folk; and, as the honor of God should be the foundation for every great enterprise, so all those who would come to live in Phalsbourg would be exempt from serfdom; that they would be freely given materials for building; that a church would be erected for them, where purity, sincerity, and good faith would be preached; that they would also have a school where the children would be taught the true religion, for the minds of the young are fertile soil in which tender plants are sown whose fragrance is wafted up to God."

He promised a thousand other advantages, exemptions, and comforts, the news of which spread throughout all Germany, and in consequence of which a great crowd of people came from all sides to enjoy these blessings. They built, they cleared, and cultivated, and made valuable the hitherto worthless land of Georges-Jean. And then the said Georges-Jean, Count of Weldentz, sold land, cattle, and inhabitants to the Duke of Lorraine, Charles III, for the sum of four hundred thousand florins, for the honor of religion and the glory of God.

The majority of the inhabitants were Lutherans, Georges-Jean having announced that the pure, true, simple faith according to St. Paul would be preached at Phalsbourg, as provided by the Confession of Augsburg. But, when he had pocketed the four hundred thousand



florins, his promises did not make him lose any sleep, and the successor of Charles III, who had promised nothing, sent his faithful councilor of state, Didier Dattel, to kindly exhort the burghers of Phalsbourg to embrace the Catholic faith, and in case some should persevere in their error, to command them to leave the place under pain of expulsion and the confiscation of their goods.

Some permitted themselves to be converted, but others, men, women, and children, departed, carrying their few old pieces of furniture in hand-carts.

Everything having been arranged satisfactorily, the dukes employed their "dear and well-beloved citizens of Phalsbourg in rebuilding the ramparts; in erecting the two gateways of quarried stone, called those of Germany and of France; in digging the ditches, in building the town hall in which to hold the courts of justice, the church wherein to teach the faithful, and the house of Monsieur le Curé adjoining the church, from which he might look well over his flock; and, lastly, the open courts, where things were assessed and imposts received." After this, the officials of His Highness established laws, charges, taxes, and tribute labor as they pleased, and the poor people worked on, father to son, from 1583 until 1789, for the benefit of the dukes of Lorraine and the kings of France, just because they had listened to the promises of Georges-Jean, of Weldentz, who was but a rascal.

Besides, the dukes established, by letters-patent, corporations in Phalsbourg, associations, as it were, of persons in the same trade, in order to prevent others from following the same calling, and in consequence, to prey upon the public without interference. To be an apprentice meant to serve three, four, and even five years. One

paid a fat sum to the master to be admitted to the trade, and after having served his time, he treated his neighbor as he himself had been treated.

One must not imagine the city as it is to-day. Without doubt the lines of the streets and the buildings of quarried stone have not changed, but then not a house was painted, and all were moldy and gray. All had arched windows and doors. Under the small arches behind the mullioned windows, one could see the tailor sitting cross-legged at his bench cutting the cloth or busy with the needle, and the weaver plying his trade, making the shuttle fly.

The soldiers of the garrison, with their three-cornered hats and shabby white coats falling almost down to their heels, were the most destitute of all. They ate only once a day. The keepers of the inns and taverns were wont to go from door to door begging the leavings of the table for these poor devils.

This is the way things were a few years before the Revolution.

The people were miserable and poverty-stricken. A dress was left as a legacy to a grandch'ld by her grandmother; a pair of shoes belonging to the grandfather was bequeathed to his grandson.

In the streets, no pavements; the nights unrelieved by a single lamp; no eaves at the roofs; a little pane of glass broken, and the hole stopped up with a bit of paper these twenty years. In the midst of this destitution the prevost in his black cap, passed and mounted the steps of the town hall; young noble officers in small three-cornered hats and white coats, the swords slung across their backs, promenaded leisurely; the monks, with their long, unkempt

beards, their homespun habits, and without shirts, walking in troops to the monastery which to-day is the college—all this passes before my mind as if it were but yesterday, and a cry rises within me, "What happiness for us poor unfortunates that the Revolution came, but mainly for us poor peasants!" Because if the destitution was great in the cities, that of the country people passes anything that can be imagined.

In the first place, the peasants were burdened with the same charges as the bourgeois, and a quantity of others besides.

In every village of Lorraine there was a farm belonging to the seignior or the monastery, to which all the good land belonged; the worst only was left to the poor people. The poor peasants could not even plant what they wanted on their own land; pastures had to remain pastures, tilled fields had to be tilled fields. If the peasant changed his field into a pasture he deprived the curé of his tithe; if he turned his pasture into a field, he lessened his right to the common pasture; if he sowed clover on fallow ground he could not prevent the flocks of the seignior or the monastery from browsing on it. His lands were burdened with fruit trees which were rented every year for the profit of the seignior or the abbot; he could not destroy these trees, and was even obliged to replace them if they died. Their shade, the damage caused by the gathering of the fruit, the hindrance to plowing by reason of the trunks and the roots—all occasioned great loss to him.

Besides, the seignior had the right to hunt, to ride over ripe fields, and to trample down the harvests at all seasons; but the peasant who killed a single piece of game, even in his own field, ran the risk of being sent to the galleys.

The seignior and the abbot also had the right to send their herds to the pasture one hour before the villagers; the beasts of the peasants had what they left, and suffered.

The farm of the seignior or the abbot also had the right to keep innumerable flocks of pigeons that covered all the fields. One had to sow a double amount of hemp, a double amount of vetches, to hope for any harvest at all.

In addition to all this, each head of family owed the seignior, in the course of the year, fifteen measures of oats, ten chickens, and twenty-four eggs. He owed him besides three days of labor for himself, three for each of his sons or servants, and three for each horse or wagon. He was compelled to mow the hay around the château, to turn and garner it into the barns at the first stroke of the bell, under pain of five gros fine for each dereliction. He was also obliged to carry all the stone and wood necessary for repairs on the farm or the château—for which the seignior fed him with a crust of bread and a head of garlic for a day's work. This is what was called the *corvée*.

If I were to speak of the ovens, the mills, the presses, which all the village had to use in common—for a consideration, of course—if I were to speak of the executioner, who had the right to the skin of every dead beast, and lastly, the worst tithe imaginable, we had to give the curé every eleventh sheaf, when we were already feeding so many monks and ecclesiastical beggars of all kinds—if I were to speak of all these and a thousand others which bore down on the population of the villages, there would be no end to the recital. It seemed as if the seigniors and the monasteries had determined upon the exter-

mination of the unfortunate peasants and were seeking the very surest means to gain their end. But the measure was not yet full.

While our country remained under the domination of the dukes, the rights of His Highness, of the seigniors, abbots, priors, monasteries, and convents were sufficient to weigh us down; after the death of Stanislas and the reunion of Lorraine to France, the tax for the king still remained to be added; that is to say, that each father ✓ owed twelve cents for each child and each servant; further, the tax for the king's furnishings, the twentieth part of the net profit of the land, but of the peasant's land only, for neither the seignior nor the clergy paid any such tax. And then the tax on salt and tobacco, from which the seigniors and the clergy were also exempt. And then the king's gabelle,\* or general taxes.

Yet, if the princes, the seigniors, and the ecclesiastics who had possessed the best land for centuries and had forced the peasants to plow, sow, and reap for them, and pay them innumerable taxes, assessments, and imposts besides, if they had employed their wealth to make roads, dig canals, and reclaim swamps, to enrich the soil, to build schools and hospitals, the injustice would still have been bad enough, but they consulted only their pleasure, their pride, and their greed. And when one saw a cardinal, a Louis de Rohan, prince of the Church, as they called him, 'living a dissolute life at Saverne, laughing in honest men's faces, and ordering his lackeys to beat peasants in the road before his carriage;' when one saw at Neuville, at Bouxviller, at Hildeshausen, the seigniors

\* The gabelle was an excise duty, principally on salt, the profit from which generally went direct to the king.

building pheasant houses, orangeries, and hot-houses, making gardens half a league long full of marble vases, statues, and fountains, to resemble those of the king at Versailles, not to mention the fallen women clothed in silks which they flaunted in the faces of the miserable people; when one saw the files of Carmelite, Capuchin, and Cordelier monks begging and yet gorging themselves from the first day of the year to the last; when one saw the bailiffs, the prevosts, the seneschals, the officials of all kinds, concern themselves with nothing but their own provender, and living on the assessments and fines; when one saw this and a thousand other things, it was very sad, the more so that the sons of the peasants alone supported all this, at the cost of their parents, their friends, and themselves.

Once in a regiment, these sons of peasants forgot all they had suffered in the villages; they forgot their mothers and sisters; they only knew their officers, their colonels, the nobles who had bought them, and for whom they would have massacred the whole country, saying that the honor of the flag demanded it. Yet not one of them could become an officer—the rustic was not worthy to wear the epaulets—but, after having been crippled in battle, he was granted permission to go begging. The sharpers posted in taverns here and there tried to impress conscripts by fraud and to keep the bonus; the boldest of them even stopping people on the highway. Sometimes gendarmes and even a whole company had to be sent against them. I have seen a dozen of them hanged in Phalsbourg, most of them old soldiers retired after the Seven Years' War. They had quite lost the habit of work, and they never received a sou of pension. They

were all taken at Vilschberg while holding up a despatch boat on the Saverne.

One can now picture to himself the ancient régime as it was—the nobles and the ecclesiastics had all, and the people had nothing.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

These things are quite changed now, thank God! The peasants have taken a big share of the world, and I, naturally, have not been among the last. All the people of the country around know Père Michel's farm, his fine fields of Valtin, his beautiful light brown Swiss cows, that browse beyond the pines of Bonne Fontaine, and his twelve big yoke of oxen.

I cannot complain. My grandson Jacques is at the Polytechnique in Paris, among the first. My granddaughter Christine is married to the inspector of forests, Martin, a man of good sense. My other granddaughter, Juliette, has married a military engineer, Commander Forbin. And the last, Michel, whom I love best, because he is the last, wants to be a doctor. He entered the university last year at Nancy, and provided he works, all will go well. And all this I owe to the Revolution.

Before '89 I would have had nothing. I would have worked all my life for the seignior and the monastery. And so, when I am in my old arm-chair in the middle of the big dining-room, where the old china on the shelf above the door shines in the firelight, and the grandmother and the chickens come and go around me; when my old dog lies by the hour stretched out by the hearth gazing at me, his nose between his paws; when I look outside at my fruit-trees laden with blossoms, my old beehives, and

I hear in the large courtyard my farm boys singing or laughing with the girls, or the plows going to the fields, the hay wagons coming back with snapping of whip and neighing of horses; when I sit there thinking, and represent to myself the miserable hut in which my poor father and mother, brothers and sisters lived, in 1780, the four walls bare and decaying, the windows stuffed up with straw, the thatch flattened by rain and snow and wind, this sort of black hole, moldy and stuffy, where we almost choked in the smoke, and where the cold and hunger caused our teeth to chatter; when I think of those good people, this good father and courageous mother, working without pause to provide us with a few beans; and when I see them covered with rags, with pale and wan faces, I shudder within myself, and if I am alone, I bow my head and weep.

My indignation against those who forced such an existence upon us to wring the last sou from us will never die down. My eighty-five years do not help it; quite the contrary. The older I get the more it grows. And to think that some sons of the people, like the Gros-Jacques, the Gros-Jeans, or the Guillots, write in their journals that the Revolution has lost all, that we were much honester and much happier before '89. Scoundrels! Every time one of these papers falls into my hands I tremble with anger. Michel may keep on telling me, "But, grandfather, why do you get so angry? These fellows are paid to mislead the people, in order to hoodwink them. It's their trade, the very bread and butter of these poor devils." But I answer, "No; we shot by the dozen in 1799 those who were worth a thousand times more than them! They were noblemen and soldiers

of Condé who were defending their own cause. But to betray father, mother, children, country, to fill one's belly—that's too much!" If I were to read these journals often I would get a stroke of apoplexy. Fortunately my wife takes them away, if by chance they are brought to the farm. They are like the plague; they get in everywhere. No need to ask for them.

I have, therefore, resolved to write this history, the "Story of a Peasant," to destroy this venom, and to show the people just what we have suffered. I have thought over this for a long time. My wife has gathered and put away all our old letters. This work will cost me a great deal of labor, but one should not shirk when he wishes to do good; and besides, it will be a real pleasure to worry those who worry us. For that alone I would spend years at my writing-desk, my spectacles astride my nose.

It will amuse you and do me good to think that we have kicked out the scalawags. There is no need for me to hurry; sometimes one thing, sometimes another will come back to my mind, and I will write all in order, for without order nothing goes.

Now I begin.

You can't make me believe that the peasants were happy before the Revolution. I have seen the good times, as they were called; I have seen our old villages; I have seen the common oven where the galette was cooked once a year, and the common press to which one only went to press for the seignior or the abbot. I have seen the rustics, with their bones showing through their flesh, without shoes or shirts, with a simple blouse and trousers of linen, summer and winter; their wives so

tanned, so dirty and ragged that you could have mistaken them for beasts; their naked children dragging themselves in the dirt at the door with but a bit of linen as covering. Ah, the lords themselves could not refrain from writing in their books that the poor beasts of burden, bent over the soil, under the sun and rain, to earn the bread for everybody, deserved to eat a bit themselves. They wrote that in a happy moment, and then forgot it.

Those things can never be forgotten. Here was Mittelbronn, Hultenhausen, Baraques—here was the whole country. And the old people were talking of a still worse state of things. They were speaking of the great wars of the Swedes, the French, and the Lorraine, in which peasants were hanged in bunches on all the trees. They also spoke of the great pestilence to come later, to consummate the ruin of the world. And they cried, raising their hands, "Lord God, preserve us from pestilence, war, and famine." But the famine, one had it every year. With the sixteen chapters, twenty-eight abbeys, thirty-six priories, forty-seven monasteries, and nineteen convents in a single diocese, how was one to raise enough beans, peas, and lentils for the winter? Potatoes were yet unknown, and the poor had no other resource than the dry beans and peas. How to get together enough provisions—no day laborer could solve the problem. After all the imposts and taxes he was laboring under, and to which was added that of the vineyard in sections where the vines grew, finally, after all this mass of serf labor, in which all the "good time" was spent in working for the seignior or the abbot, what could one do for himself or his children? Nothing. Therefore, when the dull season came, three-fourths of the village went begging.

of Condé who were defending their own cause. But to betray father, mother, children, country, to fill one's belly—that's too much!" If I were to read these journals often I would get a stroke of apoplexy. Fortunately my wife takes them away, if by chance they are brought to the farm. They are like the plague; they get in everywhere. No need to ask for them.

I have, therefore, resolved to write this history, the "Story of a Peasant," to destroy this venom, and to show the people just what we have suffered. I have thought over this for a long time. My wife has gathered and put away all our old letters. This work will cost me a great deal of labor, but one should not shirk when he wishes to do good; and besides, it will be a real pleasure to worry those who worry us. For that alone I would spend years at my writing-desk, my spectacles astride my nose.


It will amuse you and do me good to think that we have kicked out the scalawags. There is no need for me to hurry; sometimes one thing, sometimes another will come back to my mind, and I will write all in order, for without order nothing goes.

Now I begin.

You can't make me believe that the peasants were happy before the Revolution. I have seen the good times, as they were called; I have seen our old villages; I have seen the common oven where the galette was cooked once a year, and the common press to which one only went to press for the seignior or the abbot. I have seen the rustics, with their bones showing through their flesh, without shoes or shirts, with a simple blouse and trousers of linen, summer and winter; their wives so

tanned, so dirty and ragged that you could have mistaken them for beasts; their naked children dragging themselves in the dirt at the door with but a bit of linen as covering. Ah, the lords themselves could not refrain from writing in their books that the poor beasts of burden, bent over the soil, under the sun and rain, to earn the bread for everybody, deserved to eat a bit themselves. They wrote that in a happy moment, and then forgot it.

Those things can never be forgotten. Here was Mittelbronn, Hultenhausen, Baraques—here was the whole country. And the old people were talking of a still worse state of things. They were speaking of the great wars of the Swedes, the French, and the Lorraine, in which peasants were hanged in bunches on all the trees. They also spoke of the great pestilence to come later, to consummate the ruin of the world. And they cried, raising their hands, "Lord God, preserve us from pestilence, war, and famine." But the famine, one had it every year. With the sixteen chapters, twenty-eight abbeys, thirty-six priories, forty-seven monasteries, and nineteen convents in a single diocese, how was one to raise enough beans, peas, and lentils for the winter? Potatoes were yet unknown, and the poor had no other resource than the dry beans and peas. How to get together enough provisions—no day laborer could solve the problem. After all the imposts and taxes he was laboring under, and to which was added that of the vineyard in sections where the vines grew, finally, after all this mass of serf labor, in which all the "good time" was spent in working for the seignior or the abbot, what could one do for himself or his children? Nothing. Therefore, when the dull season came, three-fourths of the village went begging.



of Condé who were defending their own cause. But to betray father, mother, children, country, to fill one's belly—that's too much!" If I were to read these journals often I would get a stroke of apoplexy. Fortunately my wife takes them away, if by chance they are brought to the farm. They are like the plague; they get in everywhere. No need to ask for them.

I have, therefore, resolved to write this history, the "Story of a Peasant," to destroy this venom, and to show the people just what we have suffered. I have thought over this for a long time. My wife has gathered and put away all our old letters. This work will cost me a great deal of labor, but one should not shirk when he wishes to do good; and besides, it will be a real pleasure to worry those who worry us. For that alone I would spend years at my writing-desk, my spectacles astride my nose.


It will amuse you and do me good to think that we have kicked out the scalawags. There is no need for me to hurry; sometimes one thing, sometimes another will come back to my mind, and I will write all in order, for without order nothing goes.

Now I begin.

You can't make me believe that the peasants were happy before the Revolution. I have seen the good times, as they were called; I have seen our old villages; I have seen the common oven where the galette was cooked once a year, and the common press to which one only went to press for the seignior or the abbot. I have seen the rustics, with their bones showing through their flesh, without shoes or shirts, with a simple blouse and trousers of linen, summer and winter; their wives so

tanned, so dirty and ragged that you could have mistaken them for beasts; their naked children dragging themselves in the dirt at the door with but a bit of linen as covering. Ah, the lords themselves could not refrain from writing in their books that the poor beasts of burden, bent over the soil, under the sun and rain, to earn the bread for everybody, deserved to eat a bit themselves. They wrote that in a happy moment, and then forgot it.

Those things can never be forgotten. Here was Mittelbronn, Hultenhausen, Baraques—here was the whole country. And the old people were talking of a still worse state of things. They were speaking of the great wars of the Swedes, the French, and the Lorraineese, in which peasants were hanged in bunches on all the trees. They also spoke of the great pestilence to come later, to consummate the ruin of the world. And they cried, raising their hands, "Lord God, preserve us from pestilence, war, and famine." But the famine, one had it every year. With the sixteen chapters, twenty-eight abbeys, thirty-six priories, forty-seven monasteries, and nineteen convents in a single diocese, how was one to raise enough beans, peas, and lentils for the winter? Potatoes were yet unknown, and the poor had no other resource than the dry beans and peas. How to get together enough provisions—no day laborer could solve the problem. After all the imposts and taxes he was laboring under, and to which was added that of the vineyard in sections where the vines grew, finally, after all this mass of serf labor, in which all the "good time" was spent in working for the seignior or the abbot, what could one do for himself or his children? Nothing. Therefore, when the dull season came, three-fourths of the village went begging.





The Capuchin monks of Phalsbourg protested. They insisted that, if the whole world were going to meddle with their estate, they would quit the country, and that this would be an irreparable loss to religion. And so the Prevost Schneider and the governor of the city, the Marquis de Talaru, forbade begging, and the sergeants of the Marshalsea, and even detachments of the regiments of Rouergue, Schénau, and Fare, as they were needed, aided the Capuchins. The people risked being sent to the galleys, but they had to live, and the populace went about in bands looking for food.

Ah, the destitution! This is what degrades human beings. On all the highways could be seen Capuchins, Cordeliers, and Carmelites—six-footers, built like oxen, well fitted to shovel and carry the hod—holding out their hands with a smirk for a couple of cents. How could the poor people then respect themselves?

Unfortunately, begging alone is not sufficient to obtain bread when you are hungry. Others must have it and be willing to give, and it was the fashion in those days to say, "Each one for himself, and God for all." At the end of almost every winter the report would spread that bands of footpads attacked travelers in Alsace and in Lorraine also. The military would be set in motion, and the affair would end in a grand hanging.

Imagine a poor laborer in those days with a wife and six children, without a cent, without an inch of ground, without even a single goat or hen, without any resource but the labor of his hands to live by, without hope for either himself or his children of ever obtaining anything more, because this was the order of things, because some came into the world noblemen and were entitled to every-

thing, and others came into being villeins and had to remain miserable through the ages.

Just picture to yourself these conditions. The long days of fasting, the winter nights without fire or covering, the constant fear of tax collectors, gendarmes, forest guards, and sheriffs! And yet, despite all this, when spring came, when the sun again looked into the poor man's hut, when it gleamed on the cobwebs hanging between the rafters, the tiny hearth in the corner to the left and the foot of the ladder to the right, and the warmth, the most welcome warmth, again cheered us, when the cricket began to chirp again, and the woods took on once more their green leaves, despite it all, we were happy to be alive and to stretch ourselves before the door, holding our small bare feet in our hands, to laugh, to whistle, to look up at the sky, and to roll in the dust.

And then, when we saw father coming out of the woods, a big bundle of green locust branches or birch twigs on his shoulder, the handle of the ax showing underneath, and his hair hanging over his face, and when he would discover us from a distance and smile at us, we would all run to meet him. Then he would put down his fagots for a moment to kiss the smallest, and his face, his blue eyes, his nose, and his homely lips would all light up, and he seemed so happy. How good he was, and how he loved us!

And the good mother! The poor woman, gray and wrinkled at forty, and yet always brave and courageous, always in the fields tilling the soil of others, in the evening spinning for others, to feed the brood, to pay the taxes, the imposts, and the exactions of all kinds. What courage and what misery—to work, always to

work, without the hope of other reward than the life eternal!

But that was not all. The worst plague of the poor peasants was that they owed. I remember as a child hearing my father say when he returned from the town where he had sold a few baskets or a couple of dozen of brooms, "Here is the salt, here are the beans or rice, but I have not a cent left. My God, my God, I had hoped that a few sous would be left for M. Robin!" This Robin was the richest rascal in Mittelbronn, a man with a big face and a great beard turning gray, a sealskin cap tied under his chin, a big nose, a yellow skin, and round eyes, with a sort of bag on his shoulders as a kind of coat. He would go about in long linen gaiters reaching to his knees, a big basket under his arm, and a shepherd dog at his heels. This man ran around the country to collect his interest, for he loaned to everybody, in sums of two pounds, three pounds, or one or two gold louis. He would enter the houses, and if the money was not ready for him, he took anything he could lay hands on—half a dozen of eggs, a quarter of a pound of butter, a small bottle of kirsch, or a bit of cheese; in fact, anything one had. This would appease him for the time. One preferred also to be robbed than to be visited by the sheriff.

How many unfortunates even to-day are devoured by brigands of that kind; how many toil for a miserable debt and wear themselves out without ever seeing the end of their trouble!

In our hut Robin found nothing to lay his hands on, but he would knock on the window and shout, "Jean-Pierre?" Father would run out tremblingly, his cap in his hand, and ask, "Monsieur Robin?"

"Ah! you are there. I have two jobs to be attended to on the road from Hérange to Lixheim. You will be there?"

"Yes, Monsieur Robin, yes."

"To-morrow, without fail?"

"Yes, Monsieur Robin."

Then the other would leave. Father would come back quite pale. He would seat himself in the corner of the hut and would resume his basket-work without saying a word, his head low and his lips compressed. On the morrow he would not fail to go to perform the corvée for Monsieur Robin. And my mother would exclaim, 'Oh, that miserable goat! That miserable goat! We've paid for it ten times over. It's dead, but it will cause us all to perish yet. Alas, that we should ever have bought that old beast! Ah, woe is me!' And then she would lift her hands in despair.

By this time father would be quite a distance on his way, his pick on his shoulder. On such days he did not bring anything home, poor man. But the interest was paid for a month or two. This never lasted for very long. One fine morning Robin would knock on the window again.

They talk sometimes of sicknesses which eat your heart away and dry up your blood, but the real disease of the poor is the usurers, those leeches who live on the unfortunates while giving themselves the air of helping the poor wretches, and who worry their victims until they are laid under the sod. And even then they would take it out of the widows and children.

What my poor parents have suffered because of that rascal Robin can never be told. They could not sleep,

they had not a minute of repose, and aged with grief. Their only consolation was the chance that one of us would get a good number at the conscription and then could sell it to pay the debt.

We were four boys and two girls: Nicolas, Lisbeth, I, Claude, Mathurine, and the little Étienne, a poor misshapen, tiny being, pale and sickly, whom the people of Baraques called the little duck, because when he walked he rocked himself on his poor crippled little legs. The rest of us were well and normal. Mother would often say, looking at us—that is, Nicolas, Claude, and me—“Do not grieve, Jean-Pierre. One of the three must win at the conscription. And then, look out for Robin! As soon as he is paid I will break his head with a hatchet!”

One must indeed be unhappy to have such thoughts. Father would not answer, and the rest of us, we found it all so natural to be sold, for we believed that we belonged to our father and mother just like any head of cattle. Great destitution perverts people's minds and prevents them from seeing things as they are. Before the Revolution, all except the nobles and the bourgeois regarded their children as chattels. This is what people thought so fine, and why they say that the respect for father and mother was so much greater then.

Fortunately, our father's heart was too good to wish to profit by us, and the poor man would often weep when, during a famine in the winter, he was forced to send us out begging with the rest. But he would never let little Étienne go out in the snow. I also did not go begging very long. I do not remember being on the road of Mittelbronn and Quatre-Vents more than two or three times, for I was barely eight years old when my godfather,

Jean Leroux, inn-keeper and blacksmith at the other end of the village, hired me to look after his cattle, and then I would only return home to sleep.

These things are far behind us now, and yet I can still see the inn of the Three Pigeons, on the crest of the ridge. I see Phalsbourg at the end of the road as if painted in gray against the sky. Before the inn the small black forge, and behind it the gently sloping orchard with its great oak in the middle and its little sparkling spring, whose water went bubbling over great stones arranged for it, and spread itself over the green grass, while the oak spread its shade over it. Around this oak the soldiers of the regiment of Bocard, in 1778, by order of their major, Bachmann, had made a seat, and built arbors covered with honeysuckle and ivy. Ever since the officers of all the regiments would resort there to amuse themselves, and the place was called the Tivoli. The wives and daughters of the magistrates and syndics came to drink of the waters of the Tivoli every Sunday and to dance under the oak.

Here the grand Chevalier d'Ozé, of the Brie regiment, would take his place at the head of the spring, raise a bottle full of water in the air, roll up his eyes, and speak Latin. The ladies, sitting on the grass with their beautiful flowered silk dresses, small satin shoes with steel buckles, and tiny round hats covered with daisies and poppies, would listen to him with rapt faces, but without understanding a word. And then the quartermaster, Venier, with his little bit of a violin, would begin to play minuets while rocking himself to and fro. The chevaliers would then rise, with their little three-cornered hats on their ears, would bow and scrape to the ladies, who would

adjust their voluminous dresses and take their places. In those days they danced sedately, and with dignity. The servants—all old soldiers—would run to the inn and bring out baskets of wine, pasties, and sweetmeats that a donkey had brought from the city.

The poor people of Baraques, standing in the dusty road with their noses pressed against the fence of the orchard, contemplated this fine assemblage, principally when the corks would pop out or when the pasties were opened, each one longing to be in the places of the nobility, even for a small quarter of an hour.

Finally, when evening came, the gentlemanly officers would offer their arms to the ladies, and the noble company would slowly return to Phalsbourg.

Many regiments have passed through the Tivoli of Master Jean; up to the year of '91, those of Castella de Rouergue, of Schénau, of Fare, and of Royal-Allemand. The syndics, the magistrates, and counselors also came with their big wigs so powdered that their black coats were white on the backs. They also led a joyous life. And now, of all those who danced or looked on, I am without doubt the only one left, and if I did not speak of them they would be forgotten as the leaves that fell in 1778.

Once at my godfather's I was not to be pitied. I had my pair of shoes every year and my food. How many others would have been overjoyed to have as much. And I appreciated it. I did not neglect anything which might please Master Jean, Madam Catharine, his wife; even to the companion Valentine and the servant Nicole. I tried to be on the right side of every one. I ran when I was called, either to blow the bellows for the forge or to climb to the loft to get down hay for the beasts. I would

not even have displeased the cat of the household. For to be seated at the end of the well filled table before a fine plate of soup or a platter of cabbage trimmed with bacon on a Sunday and to eat as much good rye bread as one wants, is quite different from having one's nose stuck in a dish of beans with a little salt that mother was sparing of, and to have to count the spoonfuls—that was a great difference.

When one is well off he should be content. Therefore, every morning, in summer at four o'clock and in winter at five, while the people of the inn were still sleeping, and the cattle still ruminating in the stable, I would come to the door and knock softly twice. The servant would then awake and let me in. Then I would go and poke up the fire in the kitchen to find a bit of live coal with which to light my lantern, and while Nicole was busy milking the cows, I would run to the loft for hay and oats, and would feed the horses of the grain merchants and the truckmen who slept at the inn on market days. They would come down and look and find everything in order. After that I would help them pull their wagons from under the sheds, hand them the bridles, and tighten the buckles. Then they would start off, shouting, "Get up there, Fox, get up, Reppel!" And I, with my little woolen bonnet in my hand, would stand off and bid them "Good morning!" These big carters and dealers would not answer me by even a word, but they were pleased. They found no fault with the service, and that was the main thing.

Once in the kitchen, Nicole would give me a bowl of curdled milk, which I would eat with a great appetite. She would also give me a piece of bread when I went to



the pasture, two or three big onions, and sometimes a hard boiled egg or a little butter. I would put all this in my bag and trot off to the stable, snapping my whip. All the cattle would go out one by one. I would pat them and then we would go on in single file down the valley of Roches, I running on behind like one transported.

The people of Phalsbourg who go to bathe in the river Zorne know well these masses of rocks piled up high as the eye can see, the thin heather which grows in their crevices, and the trickling stream in which the water-cresses grow, drying up as soon as the white butterflies of June appear.

Here is where I used to go. We had the right to pasture on the uncultivated lands of the city, and only at the end of August, when the young shoots had become woody so that the cattle could not tear them up, were the beasts allowed to go into the woods.

Meanwhile one had to live in the open. The shepherds of Phalsbourg would come with swine, which, during the heat of midday, would make holes in the sand and lie pressed one against the other like hens in a chicken-coop, and sleep with their great pink ears over their eyes. One could have walked over them without stirring them. But our goats would climb as high as the clouds. We had to run, whistle, and send the dogs after them, and those rascally beasts, the more one called the higher they went. The boys from the other villages would also come, one with a blind old nag, another with his mangy cow, but most of them with nothing but a whip to snap. They would run about, dig out turnips, beets, and carrots, right and left in the field. When the guard would catch them they would be paraded in the city with a collar of

nettles around their necks. But they did not care. Yet, if they had been caught two or three times, depending upon their age, they would have been whipped in the market-place, where the executioner would tear up their backs with a rawhide. If caught a third time they would be sent to prison, and that they feared. How often have I heard rich folk cry out against the Revolution, and have recalled all at once that their grandfathers or grandmothers were so punished in the good old times, and then could not help laughing. There are some funny things in this world.

But I must really admit that this was the time that I look back upon with regret, not because I regret the times of the executioners, the prevosts, the seigniors, and the abbots, oh no! but because I was young then. And if our masters were not worth much, the sky was beautiful just the same. Then my older brother Nicolas and the others, Claude, Lisbeth, and Mathurine, would come. They would take my bag and I would yell, and we would fight. But even if they had taken everything from me, Master Jean would have gone to the hut in the evening. They knew it, and always left me my share, calling me their abbot.

After that my big brother Nicolas would always stand up in my defense. All the boys of the neighboring villages would fight with sticks and stones, and our big Nicolas, with a bit of three-cornered hat on his pate, his old soldier's coat all torn and buttoned clear down over his thighs, with a big stick and barefooted, marching at the head of the boys of Baraques like a chief of savages, would shout so loudly, "Follow me!" that you could hear him away off on the hill of Dan. I could not help loving

him, for he would say almost every moment, "The first one who touches Michel, let him look out." Only he would take my onions, and that bothered me.

The boys also encouraged fighting among the cattle, and when they would jostle one another with horns interlocked, to the point of dislocating their quarters, Nicolas would laugh and say, "The big red one is going to knock over the other. No, now the other one is attacking. Go for him, go for him!" Many a time they sprained their limbs and left horns on the field of battle.

Towards evening we would all sit down with our backs against the rocks, watching the night falling, listening to the hum in the air and the ripple of the distant brook in which the frogs were beginning their evening song.

This was the time to return home. Nicolas would then blow his horn, the echoes answering from rock to rock. The cattle would all gather and begin their climb toward Baraques in a cloud of dust. I would return with ours to the stable, replenish the manger, and eat my supper with Master Jean, Dame Catharine, and Nicole. In the summer, when they worked at the forge, I would blow the bellows until ten o'clock, and then return to sleep in the hut of my father at the end of the village.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LITTLE CALVINIST PEDDLER

And so the first two years passed. My brothers and sisters continued to beg, and I put myself out in a thousand ways to be of service to my godfather. At the age of ten the notion to learn a trade and to earn my own bread took possession of me, and Master Jean, seeing it, kept me more steadily at the forge. Whenever I think of it I seem to hear the voice of my godfather crying, "Courage, Michel, courage!"

He was a tall and stout man, with large red side-whiskers, and a thick queue hanging down his back. His moustaches were so long and bushy that he could easily hook them behind his ears. In those days the blacksmiths of the hussars also wore side-whiskers and queues tied behind in the form of a wig. I think that my godfather wanted to look like them. He had big gray eyes, a bony nose, and round cheeks, and laughed loudly once he set about it. The bib of his leather apron reached clear up to his chin, and his big arms were bare at the forge all through the winter.

He was continually disputing with Valentine, his companion, a big lank fellow, thin and stooped, who found everything in the world perfect, the nobles, the monks, and masters—everything.

"You fool!" my godfather would shout; "if those things did not exist, you would be a master blacksmith

long ago like me. You would have laid by something and could live at your ease."

"It's all the same to me," Valentine would answer; "you can think what you please. I am for our holy religion, the nobility, and the king. It is the order established by God."

Then Master Jean would shrug his shoulders brusquely and say, "Well, if you find everything as it should be, I am willing. Come on." And we would start at the forge.

I have never met a better man than Valentine, but he had a head like a bullet, and he reasoned like a goose. It was not his fault and one could not blame him for it.

Dame Catharine thought like her husband, and Nicole like Dame Catharine. Everything prospered at the inn. Master Jean earned good sums of money every year. When the assessors for the *corvée*, wood cutting, and other imposts for Baraques, were appointed, he was always on the list, together with the master forester, Cochart, and the head wheelwright, Létumier, and he made out of it three or four hundred francs.

We must bear in mind that the carters, the wagoners, and the truck farmers from Alsace usually passed through Baraques on their way to the city market. As the road from Saverne to Phalsbourg was very steep and very uneven, plowed in with deep ruts and even ravines, where one ran the risk of being pitched down to the Schlittenbach, and as five or six dray horses were necessary to glimb that steep hill, people preferred to make a detour through the valley of the Zorne, and most all of them on the way back would stop at the inn of the Three Pigeons.

The forge and the inn served each other well. While

the horse was being shod and the wagon repaired, the driver would go into the inn, from the window of which he could see what was going on outside, while he was breaking his crust of bread and draining his pint of white wine. On fair days the big eating-room would be alive with people. They came in bands, with their panniers, their baskets, and their hand-carts. When coming back they usually had a glass too much in their heads and made no bones of saying just what they thought. There was no end to the complaints, especially from the women. They could not say enough; they called the seigniors and the prevosts by their true names; they told of all their villainies and when their husbands would have calmed them a little, the women called the men poor fools. The merchants of Alsace were especially bitter against the tolls which deprived them of all the benefit of their work, for they had to pay to get from Alsace into Lorraine. The poor Jews who were fleeced at all the toll-gates—so much per Jew and so much per donkey—did not dare complain. But the others spared no one. But, after much shouting, first one then another would rise, saying: "Of course we are being strangled. The duties increase every day. But what will you? The peasants will be peasants and the seigniors seigniors. While the world lasts the seigniors will always be on top and we below. Well, God help us! Here, Dame Catharine, take your pay. Here is your money. Let us go!"

And the whole band would depart. Perhaps an old woman would then begin to pray aloud to make the march less wearisome, the other women making the responses, while the men with bent heads trudged on dreamily. I have often thought that this sort of humming caused by

the prayers and the responses spared them the trouble of thinking, and that it eased their minds. The idea of helping themselves by getting rid of the salt-maker, the collector, the toll-gatherers, the seigniors, the monks, and of all that bothered them, and to put the tithes, the subsidies, the "twentieths,"\* and all the imposts into their own pockets—as they did later on—this idea had not come into their heads yet. They relied solely on the good God.

All this traffic, these complaints, swarming of Jews, of carters, and peasants in the great dining-room on the days of the fairs, their disputes over the price of cattle, of wheat and oats and crops of all kinds, their faces when they struck one hand on the other and ordered a pot of liquor to moisten the bargain, according to their custom—all this taught me to know men and things. One could not wish for a better school for a child, and if I have since acquired property, it is because I knew the price of grain, of cattle, and land these many years. The old Jew Schmoûle and the big Mathias Fischer, of Harberg, had taught me, for they frequently disputed together over the price of commodities. I, little as I was, while running to get the goblets and the pitchers, would open big eyes and cock my ears, you may believe.

What I liked best was to hear Master Jean read the newspaper after supper. Nowadays the smallest inn of the village has its journal; the old *Messenger Boiteux* (Limping Messenger) of Silbermann, hanging behind the window, no longer counts; every one wants to know the

\* Besides the tithes, or tenth parts, the French peasant had to pay a twentieth on some of his produce. In French, the word *vingtième* conveys this idea.

news of the country and read his *Courier du Bas-Rhin* (Courier of the Lower Rhine) or his *Imparcial de la Meurthe* (the Meurthe Impartial) at least two or three times a week. Every one would be ashamed to live like a donkey without troubling himself about what concerns every one else. But before '89 the people who had no business meddling with anything and were only good to shoulder the imposts—as many as it might please the king to pile on their backs—these people did not like to read, and many of them did not know the first letter. And besides, the newspapers were very dear, and though Master Jean was quite well-to-do, he would not have spent so much for his own pleasure.

Fortunately, the little peddler, Chauvel, would bring us a bundle of papers every time he came back from his round in Alsace-Lorraine and the Palatinate.

Here, again, is a type that one does not see since the time of the Revolution: the peddler of almanacs, prayer-books, canticles, catechisms, and alphabets, called *croisettes* at that time, who traveled between Strassburg and Metz, between Trêve and Nancy, Pont-à-Mousson, Toul, and Verdun, whom one would meet on all the paths, in the depths of the forest, before farms, convents, abbeys, and the outskirts of villages, with his homespun jacket, his gaiters, with bone buttons, reaching to the knees, and thick shoes studded with shining nails, his back bent, the leather strap across his shoulder, and the immense willow pannier on his back like a mountain. He sold missals; but how many forbidden books also were smuggled in, of Rousseau, Voltaire, Raynal, Helvetius!

Père Chauvel was the sharpest and the boldest of these



smugglers of Alsace and Lorraine. He was a little, dark man, dry and nervous, with lips compressed and nose hooked. His pannier looked as though it might crush him, but he carried it with ease nevertheless. In passing, his little black eyes would look into the depths of your soul. He knew at a glance what you were, whether you wanted anything, whether you belonged to the gendarmerie,\* whether he should shun you or offer you one of his books. And well he might, for to be caught at smuggling such things was to be sent to the galleys.

Every time he returned from these trips, Chauvel would first come to us, at night, when the inn was empty and everything was quiet in the village. Then he would come with his little Marguerite, who never left his side, even when he was on the road. Whenever we heard their footsteps on the lane we would exclaim, "Here comes Chauvel, we shall hear something new!" Nicole would run to open the door and Chauvel would come in, holding the child by the hand, nodding his head mildly. This memory makes me younger by seventy-five years. I see him again with Marguerite, dark as a whortleberry, her little blue linen dress hanging down in fringes, her black hair scattered over her shoulders.

Chauvel would hand the bundle of papers to Nicole. He would sit down behind the stove with his little girl between his knees, and Master Jean would turn and shout joyfully, "Well, Chauvel, well! How goes it, well?"

"Yes, Master Jean, it goes well. They are buying many books. The people are learning. It goes all right!" the little man would reply. When he spoke

\* The light horsemen or local governmental police.

Marguerite would look at him with extraordinary attention. One could see she understood everything.

These peddlers were Calvinists, true Calvinists from Rochelle, who had been driven from thence and subsequently from Lixheim, and for the past ten or twelve years lived at Baraques. They could hold no office. Their small dwelling was closed most of the time. When they returned they would open it and stay five or six days to rest, and then again set out to ply their trade. They were looked upon as heretics and barbarians, but that did not prevent Père Chauvel from knowing more than all the Capuchins of the country put together.

Master Jean was fond of the little man. They understood each other. When the bundle of newspapers had been opened on the table and Master Jean had looked them over for a moment, he said: "This one comes from Utrecht, this one from Cleves, this one from Amsterdam. We shall see! We shall see! Ah, this is fine! This is famous! Nicole, look for my glasses! There, on the window!"

After having thus rejoiced a few moments, Master Jean began to read, and I sat in my corner and held my breath. I forgot everything, even the danger of returning to our hut too late, in winter, when the snow covered the village and packs of wolves had crossed the Rhine over the ice.

I should have left immediately after supper. My father was waiting for me. But the curiosity to learn the news of the Grand Turk, of America, and of all the countries of the world possessed me. I remained till after ten. Even to-day I can see myself in my corner to the left of the big clock; the walnut wardrobe and the door

of the little room where Master Jean slept at the right, and the big table of the inn before me against the little windows. Master Jean reads. Dame Catharine, a little woman with pink cheeks and ears covered by her white head-dress, spins while she listens. Nicole also, her bonnet on her little head, spins and listens. This poor Nicole was as red as a carrot, had freckles by the thousand, and white eyelashes. Yes, everything is here; the spinning-wheels hum, the old clock ticks, from time to time, rasping as the weights descend; the hour sounds, and the tick-tack continues. Master Jean, in his arm-chair, his steel-rimmed spectacles on his nose, like me to-day, with red ears, and side-whiskers bristling, pays no attention to anything but his newspaper. Every once in a while he turns around, looks from under his glasses, and says:

"Ah, ha, here is news from America! General Washington has beaten the English! Just see this, Chauvel!"

"Yes," replies the colporteur, "the Americans have been in revolt only three or four years. They would not pay the taxes the English were increasing every day—as others do elsewhere. And now they are getting along famously." He would smile for a moment without opening his lips, and Master Jean would begin again. At other times it would be about Frederick II, that old Prussian fox who was up to his tricks again. "Old rascal," Master Jean would mutter. "Without M. de Soubise he would not get his back up so. It is to this great beast that we owe Rosbach."

"Yes," Chauvel would answer, "that is why His Majesty has given him a pension of a million and a half francs." Then they would look at each other in silence and Master Jean would repeat, "Fifteen hundred thousand

francs to that fool! And not a cent can be found to repair the royal road from Saverne to Phalsbourg. The peasants must go around a mile in order to go from Alsace to Lorraine. Bread, wine, meal, everything goes up in price!"

"What will you! This is politics," the Calvinist would say; "we don't understand anything about politics. We only know how to work and pay. The spending belongs to the king."

When Master Jean would get too much wrought up, Dame Catharine would rise quickly and listen in the lane. Everything would become quiet then, for godfather knew what that meant. It was necessary to be prudent. Spies prowled about everywhere. If they had heard what we thought of the princes, the seigniors, and the monks, they would have made things hot for us.

Chauvel and his little girl would depart quite early, but I would wait till the last moment, when Master Jean would fold up the newspaper. Then only would he see me and call, "Eh, Michel, what are you doing there? Do you understand anything?" And, without waiting for my answer, he would say, "Well, to-morrow at break of day we will have plenty of work. It will be market day, and the forge must be heated early. Go, Michel, go."

I would immediately remember that the wolves sometimes descended upon the village, and would run to the kitchen to light a torch. The little window, with iron bars, overlooking the courtyard, was black as ink. The wind moaned outside. I hurried, shivering, and Nicole opened the door.

Hardly outside in the deep night, with the great white road between old buildings half buried in snow, with the

wind blowing, and sometimes wolves calling and answering on the plains, I would start to run, and run so fast that I would lose my breath. My hair stood on end, and I jumped over mounds of snow and manure like a goat. The old thatched roofs with the small windows beneath closed with bundles of straw covered with hoar frost, the small doors fastened with cross-pieces—everything looked frightful in the white light of my torch, which moved like a star in silence. Everything seemed dead. But even while running I could see in the depths of lanes to the right or left, shadows coming or going, and this filled me with such terror that, when I got to our hut, I would throw myself against the door like a lost soul. My poor father would be there, near the hearth, in his old patched linen trousers, and cry, "Oh, my child, how late you come! All the others are asleep. Have you been listening to the reading of the gazette again?"

"Yes, father. Here," and I would put into his hand the piece of bread that Master Jean always gave me after supper. He would take it, saying, "There, lie down, my child. But do not return so late. There are so many wolves around the country."

I slept beside my brothers, in a big box filled with leaves, covered by an old torn comforter.

The others slept, worn out by running about the village and the highroads begging. I lay awake a long time listening to the gusts of wind, and sometimes, afar off, a dull noise amid the great silence. It was the wolves attacking a stable. They bounded eight or ten feet against the windows and fell back into the snow. Then two or three terrible cries would be heard, the whole band rushing down the streets like the wind. They had taken

a dog and were running to devour it under the rocks. At other times I would be shivering to hear them sniffing and scratching under our door. Father would then rise and light a bunch of straw on the hearth, and the famished beasts would run on farther.

I have always thought that the winters in those times were longer and more severe than in our days. The snow was frequently two or three feet deep, and lasted until April, because of the large forests which have since then been cleared, and the ponds in the valleys without number, that the seigniors and monks took no trouble to drain out, because they did not want to be compelled to cultivate the land. It was more convenient. But this mass of water and woods held a good deal of dampness and cooled the air. Now everything has been parcelled out, cultivated some, the sun shines everywhere, and spring flowers the quicker. This is what I think. May it be for this reason or another, all the old people will tell you that the winter came sooner in the former years, went later, and that every year bands of wolves attacked stables and carried off the watch-dogs even from the courtyards of the farms.

## CHAPTER IV

### MASTER JEAN'S POTATO HARVEST

It was at the end of one of those long winters, a fortnight or three weeks after Easter, that an extraordinary thing happened at Baraques. That morning I had overslept—as children are apt to do—and was hurrying off to the inn of the Three Pigeons, afraid of being scolded by Nicole. We were going to scrub the floor of the big room with lye, as was done every spring and two or three other times during the year.

The cattle could not yet be taken out to pasture, as the snow was but just beginning to melt behind the hedges. But it was already warm, and all along the road the doors and small windows of the houses were open to let in the fresh air. The cows and goats were forced out of the stables so that the manure could be pitched out and the buildings washed. Claude Huré was putting a bolt on his plow under the shed, Pierre Vincent repairing the saddle of his nag. The time for labor was approaching, and every one made ready for it in good season. The old men, with their favorite children on their arms, sat before the huts breathing in the good, fresh air as it came from the mountains. It was a beautiful day, one of the first of the year. As I approached the inn, with its lower windows all open, I saw the ass belonging to Father Benedic tied to the ring at the door, with his tin ewer on his back and his two willow panniers on his haunches.

The thought came to me that Father Benedic was preaching in the house, as was his custom when strangers filled the inn, and when he hoped to make a few coins. He was the collecting friar from the Phalsbourg monastery, an old Capuchin with a yellow beard hard as dog grass, a nose shaped like a fig with tiny little blue veins, flat ears, and a receding forehead. His eyes were small, and his homespun habit so worn that one could count the threads. He had a pointed hood hanging way down his back, and his grimy toes came out of his sandals. But, hearing his tiny bell, one could smell wine and soup.

Master Jean could not bear him, but Dame Catharine always kept a nice piece of bacon for his pleasure, and when my godfather became angry, she would say, "I want to keep my seat in heaven as well as in the church. You will be glad to sit beside me in the kingdom of heaven." Then he would laugh and say no more.

I entered. The large room was filled, around the tables were seated a number of people, some from Baraques, others carters from Alsace. Then there were Nicole, Dame Catharine, Father Benedic, and Master Jean—in the center—showing them a bagful of thick gray potato parings, saying that they came from Hanover, that they produced excellent tubers in such great numbers that the people of that country had enough to eat the whole year. He encouraged them to plant some, predicting that then famine would no longer be known in Baraques, and that it would be a great blessing for us all.

Master Jean was saying these things simply, with a joyful countenance, while Chauvel stood behind him listening, he and his little Marguerite. The others took the parings in their hands, looked at them, smelled them,



and then put them back into the bag, laughing secretly as if to say: "Has any one ever seen people planting these parings? It is contrary to common sense." Some even nudged others significantly, and mocked at godfather

Suddenly Father Benedic, his nose seeming to hang from his face, and his small porcupine-like eyes half closed, turned around mockingly and laughed, the whole company soon joining him and laughing also.

Master Jean was indignant. "You laugh like fools indeed," he cried, "without knowing why. Are you not ashamed to laugh and still pretend to be wise? I am speaking seriously."

But they only laughed the louder, and the Capuchin, then seeing Chauvel, cried: "Ah, ha, this is smuggled seed. I suspected it."

It is true that Chauvel had brought over these parings from the Palatinate, where a great many people had already planted them for a number of years, and he had told us a good deal about them.

"This comes from a heretic," shouted Father Benedic. "How can you expect Christians to plant them and the Lord to spread his benediction over them?"

"You will be mighty glad to put one of those tubers under your nose from time to time when they come to be ready," retorted Master Jean, angrily.

"When they come, when they come," repeated the Capuchin, clasping his hands with an air of pity. "When they come! Alas, believe me! You have none too much land to grow your cabbage and your turnips. Let those parings alone. They will bring you nothing. It is I, Pater Benedic, who tells you so."

"You tell us a great many other things I don't

believe," answered Master Jean, putting the sack back into the cupboard. But he thought better of it and made a sign to his wife to give a good slice of bread to the Capuchin. Such beggars entered everywhere and could do one a lot of harm.

The Capuchin and the villagers departed, while I stood there, much grieved by the fun which had been made of my godfather. Father Benedic was shouting in the lane: "I hope, Dame Catharine, you will sow other things besides those parings from Hanover. It is to be hoped so, for otherwise I should be in danger of passing here a hundred times without getting a load for my donkey. Merciful heavens! I shall pray God to enlighten you." He drawled and spoke through his nose purposely. The others outside were laughing as they went up the street. Master Jean, at the window, was saying: "There you have it. Try to do something for fools! This is your reward."

Chauvel answered, "They are poor creatures who are kept in ignorance to work them the better for the profit of the seigniors and the monks. It is not their fault. You must not blame them for it. If I had a bit of field I would plant these parings and they would see my harvest, and would hasten to follow my example. This plant yields five or six times as much as any kind of cereal or vegetable. These tubers are as big as the fist, excellent to eat, very wholesome, and nourishing. I have tasted of them myself. They are white and mealy, with something of the taste of chestnuts. They can be cooked in butter or water—any way at all. They are always good."

"Rest assured, Chauvel," cried Master Jean, "they don't want any. So much the better. I shall have them

all for myself. Instead of planting a quarter of my field, I shall plant it all."

"And you will do well; all soils are good for these tubers, but mainly sandy ones," said Chauvel. And they went out together talking about the matter. Then Chauvel returned to his hut. Master Jean came in to work at the forge, and Nicole and I began to turn benches and tables one upon the other to wash the floor.

Never did the disputes between Master Jean and the Capuchin quite get out of my head. You will readily understand all this when I tell you that those thick peels were the first potato seeds that had been seen in our part of the country—those same potatoes that have preserved us from want these eighty years past. Every summer—as I see from my window—the immense plain of Diemerling covers itself, as far as the eye can reach, clear to the edge of the forest, with thick, green stalks that swell and bloom, changing the very dust itself into food for men. In the autumn when I see the thousands of sacks stand up in the field, and the men, women, and children rejoicing and singing while they load the wagons, when I think of the happiness of the poor peasants, even in their most miserable huts, in comparison with the terror we felt before '89, when long before December we saw the famine coming, when I ponder on the difference, then the mockings and bursts of laughter of all those imbeciles, fools, come back to me, and I cry within myself:

"Oh, Master Jean, oh, Chauvel, why can you not come back to life, if but for an hour during harvest-time? Come and sit at the edge of a field, contemplate the good you have done in this world! It would be worth living all over again. And Father Benedic ought to come back,

too, back to hear the bursts of laughter of the peasants which would ring out as they caught sight of him trudging along the lanes with his donkey!"

While pondering over these things, I can believe that the Supreme Being, in His justice, permits them to come back, that they are among us, and that every one enjoys the fruits of his good sense or stupidity—"world without end." Please God it may be so. This would be the real life eternal.

This is the way the seed of the potato was received among us. Master Jean seemed full of confidence. But he was not at the end of his troubles. It seemed as though, at that time, all the stupidity of the world came to light. For the news spread that Jean Leroux was out of his head, and that he was planting turnip parings to grow carrots. The merchants, and in fact all those who came to the inn, looked at him with a mocking air, and asked about his health. Naturally, all this tormenting filled him with indignation. In the evening he spoke of it bitterly, and his wife was much grieved. But that did not prevent him from cultivating and fertilizing his inclosed field behind the inn, and planting there the parings from Hanover. Nicole helped him, and I carried the bag. The villagers and passersby leaned over the low wall of the orchard that runs alongside of the road, and looked at us winking. None of us said anything, for we expected that, finally, Master Jean would get out of patience and go to answer the rogues with his cudgel.

If I were to tell you all the ridicule we had to stand before harvest-time came, you would hardly believe it. The more stupid people are the more they love to laugh at those who show good sense, when the occasion presents itself, and this occasion seemed very good to the

people of Baraques. As soon as the tubers from Hanover were mentioned all the fools would start to laugh. I was even forced to fight the boys every day at the village pasture, for they would scarcely see me coming down into the valley before they would shout, "Hi, there is that Hanoverian fellow who carries the sack for Master Jean!" Then I would fall on them with my whip, and sometimes ten of them at once would fall on me without any shame, and slash at me, crying, "Down with the tubers from Hanover! Down with the German roots!"

Unfortunately for me, neither Nicolas nor Claude was there. Nicolas was working in the forest, clearing the trees of dead branches, and Claude was making baskets and brooms with his father, or gathering birch and furze twigs—with the permission of Georges, the forest guard of Schwitzerhof—for monseigneur, the cardinal bishop from near Saint Witt. So I received the avalanche alone. But I did not cry. My fury was too great. You can imagine from all this how anxious I was to see these tubers grow—to the confusion of our enemies. Every day at dawn I leaned over the low wall of the field to see if anything was growing, and when I couldn't see anything, I went away very sad, accusing Father Benedic in my soul of having cast a spell over our field.

Before the Revolution all the peasants believed in evil spells, and this belief had caused many thousands of unfortunates to be burned. If I could have burned the Capuchin he would not have waited long for his deserts, for my indignation against him was terrible.

I fought so much with the boys of Lutzelbourg, Baraques, and Quatre-Vents, that a sort of pride possessed me. I gloried in defending our potatoes; and yet it

never occurred to me to vaunt myself. Master Jean knew nothing of this, nor did Valentine, or Dame Catharine. Only father, when in the evening he saw the long, red stripes on my legs, would wonder and say, "How is this, Michel? You who I supposed was so quiet. You also act like Nicolas. You give and take blows. Take care, child. A single blow from a whip can put out an eye. And then what would become of us? What would become of us?" He shook his head thoughtfully and then went on with his work.

In summer when we had full moon the whole family worked out of doors, in front of the door, to save the beech oil. When, from far, very far off, we heard the city clock strike ten, father would rise, put away the willow and furze, and looking up at the stars for a moment, would cry, "Oh God, oh God, how great thou art! May thy goodness rest upon thy children!"

Such words were never said with so much reverence and tenderness as when pronounced by my poor father. One could see that he understood things much better than our monks did. They recited their prayers just as I would take my pinch of snuff—without paying any attention to it. Then we would retire. The day was done.

This was in May and June. The barley, rye, and oats grew while you watched them, but in Master Jean's field nothing had yet come up. My father had often spoken to me about the tubers of Hanover, and I told him of all the good this plant might do us.

"May God be willing, my child," he would say to me. "We have great need of it. Poverty grows from day to day. The taxes are too heavy, and the corvée swallows up too many of our days." And mother would add,

“Yes, especially when you are forced to fulfil the *corvée* of others. We are in great need of a plant to save us. Let it come from Hanover or elsewhere. Things cannot last as they are.”

She was right. Unfortunately, one could not see anything growing in Master Jean's enclosure. My godfather was beginning to believe that Father Benedic had not been wrong when he laughed, and he even thought of turning over the soil to sow clover. It was hard. For one can imagine that the people of the country would have something to laugh at for years. One absolutely must succeed in order to silence these rustics. That is why so few people dare to undertake anything new, and that is why we remain in a rut. The fear of fools and imbeciles, of their mocking and laughter, prevents many enterprising and courageous men from attempting things. If we are still backward in our farming, it is due to this fact.

We were all in despair. If Chauvel had not been on one of his long tours in Lorraine, Dame Catharine would have overwhelmed him with reproaches. For she heaped all the blame on his shoulders.

One morning in the beginning of June, between four and five o'clock, I was walking down the street as usual to awaken Nicole, feed the cattle, and take them off to pasture. The dew had fallen heavily during the night, and the day broke red and hot from the direction of Quatre-Vents. In passing by the inclosure, before knocking at the door, I looked over the wall, and what did I see? To the right, to the left, tufts of greenish leaves rising everywhere. The dew had softened the ground, and the sprouts of our tubers were coming out by the thousand.

In an instant I jumped down into the field and recognized it—the sprouts which did not look like anything else that grows in the country. I ran behind the house and knocked on the shutters of the room where Master Jean and his wife slept. I knocked like one possessed. “Master Jean,” I cried.

“Who is there?”

“Open, godfather.”

He opened the window and stood there in his shirt.

“Godfather, the tubers are growing.”

Master Jean was very angry at being awakened, but when he heard what I said, his big face was full of joy.

“They are growing?”

“Yes, godfather, on all sides, at the top and at the bottom of the field. They have come in one night.”

“That is good, Michel,” he said, hurriedly dressing.

“I am coming. Hey, there, Catharine! The tubers are growing!”

His wife got out of bed quickly. They dressed, and together descended to the patch of ground. They saw that I was not mistaken. The leaves were sprouting out plentifully. It was certainly an extraordinary sight. Master Jean, with an air of admiration, observed:

“Everything that Chauvel told us has come to pass. The Capuchin and the others will have long faces now! Ha! ha! ha! What a chance this is! But now we must hoe them up. And I will do this myself. We will do everything, point for point, as Chauvel directed us. This Chauvel is a man of excellent sense. He knows more people than we do, and we must follow his advice.” Dame Catharine approved of this.

We reëntered the inn at once. We opened the win-



dows, I attended to the cattle, and I left without saying anything to anybody—I was too much astonished. But once in the valley, when the other boys began to shout, “Here comes the Hanoverian!” instead of becoming angry, I answered them proudly:

“Yes, yes; I am the one who carried the bag for Master Jean. I am Michel.”

Seeing that they were astonished, I continued:

“Go and see what there is up there,” pointing to the inclosure with my whip. “They are growing, and more than one of you beggars would like to have a lot of them in his cellar.”

I was all pride. The others looked at me in surprise, thinking, “perhaps it is true.”

Then they began to hiss or whistle and yell. But I did not answer them. I no longer felt like fighting; I had been right, and that was enough for me.

When I came in, near to six o'clock, the news had not spread in the village. Only on the morrow and the following days the news went around that the bulbs of Master Jean were growing, and that they were not turnips nor radishes, but a new plant. From morning till night people hung over our fence and looked on in silence. They no longer made fun of us. My godfather had forbidden us to say anything, because it is better that people should see their mistakes without being reproached for them by others.

In spite of that, Master Jean himself, one evening when the Capuchin was passing with his donkey, could not refrain from shouting to him, “Hey, Father Benedic! Just see! The Lord has blessed the plant of the heretic. Come and see how they grow!”

"Yes," answered the Capuchin, laughing, "I have seen them, I have seen them! What will you? I thought they came from the devil. But I see they come from the Lord. So much the better! So much the better! We will eat some of them—if they are good, of course."

This way the monks were always in the right. When a thing succeeded the Lord had made it so. When it didn't, it was the devil. And other folks only had to stand the loss. How foolish men are to listen to such creatures! As children, the infirm and the aged deserve to be helped, by so much do the ne'er-do-weels deserve to be turned away. It is a great consolation to me that I never gave anything to them. All the tramps, monks, and others who present themselves at the farm are received by my orders, in the kitchen at noon. They see the servants, looking fresh and healthy, at the table eating and drinking, as it should be when one works well and steadily. This sight awakens their appetite. My farm hand, old Peter, between two great mouthfuls, asks them, "What do you want?" And if they begin to beg, the handle of a pickax or of a shovel is offered them. Work is almost always offered them—from which they usually turn away hanging their heads. "It appears that these people do not want to work for us. What a good-for-nothing lot!" And I, standing at the door, laugh while I wish them a fair journey. If the same treatment had been applied to the other Capuchins, and all the rest of the lazy fellows of this kind, they would not have reduced the peasant to destitution and devoured for centuries the fruit of his labor.

But now I must tell you about the growth and harvest of our potatoes, and what raised Jean Leroux in the

esteem and consideration of the country people even more than he had previously been.

In July Master Jean's field could be seen from the hill of Mittelbronn like a huge white and green bouquet, the stems of which reached almost to the top of the wall. During the long, hot days when everything seemed to dry up in the fields, it was a joy to see our lovely plants spreading more and more. It only needed a little moisture to keep them in their freshness, and one imagined he saw the big thick roots lengthening and taking on body.

We dreamed of them, one might say, all the time, and in the evening we spoke of nothing else. Even the newspapers were forgotten, because the affairs of the Grand Turk and even America interested us less than our own.

By the beginning of September we saw that all the flowers had fallen and the plants had begun to wither. Then, we thought, "it is time to dig up those tubers." My godfather said: "Chauvel told us that they should be dug up in October. On the first we will try one hill, and if we must wait, why we will."

This is what he did. On the morning of the 1st of October, while the weather was foggy, about ten o'clock, Master Jean came out of the forge, entered the kitchen, took a pick from behind the door, and went down to the inclosure. We followed. At the first hill he halted and struck with his pick. When he had pulled up the plant by the roots and discovered the big pink potatoes, when we saw that at the second and the third stroke he turned up more, and that five or six hills half filled a basket, then we looked at one another in astonishment. We could not believe our eyes.

Master Jean said nothing. He took a few steps for-

ward and pulled up the stalks in one of the hills in the middle of the field and struck with the pick again. Here there were many potatoes as in the other hills, but much nicer, much finer. This was when he exclaimed: "I see now what we have. Next year I must plant my two acres on the side of the hill with these tubers, and the rest we will sell at a good price. What you give people for nothing they regard as nothing."

His wife had gathered up the potatoes into a basket, which he took and carried. We reentered the house. Once in the kitchen Master Jean told me to go and get Chauvel, who had returned only the day before from a long tour in Lorraine. He lived with his little Marguerite at the other end of Baraques. I ran to tell him and he came immediately, thinking that Master Jean had already dug up his bulbs, so he smiled in advance.

As he entered the kitchen, my godfather, his eyes shining with joy, pointed out to him the basket standing at the edge of the hearth, exclaiming, "This comes from six hills, and I have put as many more in the pot!"

"Yes, that is it," answered Chauvel, without astonishment. "That's it. I told you so."

"You will eat with us, Chauvel," said Master Jean. "We are going to taste them. And if they are good it will mean the fortune of Baraques."

"They are very good, you can believe me," said the peddler. "It is a good thing for you particularly, for on the seed alone you will make a few hundred francs."

"We shall see," said Master Jean, who could not contain himself for joy. "We shall see."

Dame Catharine had broken the eggs for an omelet with bacon. She had also prepared the big soup tureen,

in which a good cream soup was steaming. Nicole went down to the cellar to fill a pitcher with thin white wine of Alsace. Then she came up to set the table.

My godfather and Chauvel came into the dining-room. They knew that the tubers were going to be a good thing. But, to believe that they were going to change the state of the people, that they would do away with famine, and that they would do more for humanity than the king and the seigniors and all those who were lauded to the skies—such an idea could not possibly have come to them, especially to Master Jean, who saw in it principally his own profit, without, however, entirely forgetting the rest.

“If they would only taste like turnips, I would not ask for anything more.”

“They are much better and can be eaten in a thousand ways,” answered Chauvel. “You may well believe that, if I had not been sure that the plant was good and useful for you and everybody, I would not have put these parings into my basket. It is heavy enough without them. And I would not have advised you to plant them in your field.”

“Without doubt. But one may put in his word. I am like Saint Thomas. I must see and I must touch,” said Master Jean.

The little Calvinist laughed quietly and answered: “You are right. You will touch. Here is Nicole setting the table. It will not take long.”

Everything was ready. In those days the servants and the master ate together, but the kitchen maid and the good wife of the household served. They only sat at table after the meal.

We had just sat down, Master Jean and Chauvel near

the wall, little Marguerite on one side, I on the other. We were about to begin to eat when godfather exclaimed, "Here is Christopher!"

It was Monsieur Christopher Materne, curé of Lutzelbourg, a tall man with kinky red hair, just like all the Maternes of the mountains. My godfather had seen him passing before our windows. Already we heard him stamping on the steps outside to shake the earth from his thick shoes with their spikes, and he entered almost immediately, bending his wide shoulders under the top of the little door. A breviary was under his arm, a thick holly stick in his hand, and his shabby three-cornered hat on his heavy hair, already beginning to turn gray.

"Ah, ha!" he cried, in a great, strong voice, "I find you again together, you Parpaillots [a nickname for French Protestants at the time]. You are surely conspiring to reestablish the Edict of Nantes."

"Hey, you there, Christopher! You are welcome," answered Master Jean, joyfully. "Sit down, and, look. . . ."

I lifted the cover off the soup tureen.

"That's good," said the curé, good-naturedly, as he hung his hat on the wall and put his stick near the clock. "That's all right. I see what is coming. You want to get around me. But that won't work, Jean. This Chauvel is spoiling you, and I shall have to report him to the prevost."

"And who will furnish the Jean Jacques [works of Jean Jacques Rousseau—forbidden literature] to the curé on the mountain?" asked Chauvel, slyly.

"Hold your peace, you evil tongue, you," answered the curé. "All your philosophers are not worth one verse of the Gospel."

"Oh, the Gospels," said the Calvinist, "we have never asked for anything else."

"Yes, yes," answered Monsieur Materne, "you are good people. We know it. We know it, Chauvel. But we also know what is on the other side of the cards."

Then he addressed Marguerite and me, as he thrust his long legs between us. "Come, my children," he said, kindly, "make room for me."

We pushed our plates to the right and to the left. Finally Monsieur le Curé sat down, and while he was eating his soup, I, sitting on the edge of the bench, looked at him from the corner of my eye without daring to lift my nose from my plate, I was so much afraid of him, with his big, gray eyes, his kinky hair, and his giant hands.

Yet he was the very best of men, this good Curé Christopher. Instead of living quietly on the tithes, and laying by something for his old age, as many of his brother priests did, he thought only of working and of devoting himself to the good of others. In winter he kept a school in the village, and in the fair summer days when the children were taking the cattle to pasture, he worked from morning till night cutting images of saints out of stone or old oak, to give them to parishes which had not the money to buy them. A block of stone or a bit of wood was brought him, and he would return a Saint John, a Holy Virgin, or the Eternal Father.

Master Jean and Materne came from the same village. They were old friends, and loved each other well.

"Hey, Christopher, say," shouted my godfather, suddenly, when he had eaten his soup, "are you going to open your school soon?"

"Yes, Jean, next week," answered the curé. "It is

for this reason that I am here. I was on my way to Phalsbourg to get some paper and books. I expected to begin on the 20th of September. But I had to finish a Saint Peter for the parish of Aberschwiler, where they are rebuilding their church. I had promised, and of course I wished to keep my promise."

"Well, then, it is for next week."

"Yes, next Monday we begin."

"You ought to take this boy there," said my godfather, pointing to me. "He is my godchild, the son of Jean-Pierre Bastien. I am sure he would learn with a good spirit."

Hearing this, I flushed all over with pleasure, for I had long wished to be able to go to school. Monsieur Christopher turned in my direction. "Let me see," he said, placing his big hand on my head; "look at me." I looked at him with misty eyes.

"What is your name?"

"Michel, Monsieur le Curé."

"Well, Michel, you will be welcome. The door of my school is open for everybody. The more scholars the better I like it."

"That is good," said Chauvel, "that is what I call talking," and Master Jean lifted his glass and proposed the health of his friend Christopher.

Those who go to their village school quietly to-day and receive for nothing, in a way, lessons from an educated, honest man who is frequently fitted to fill a better place, these cannot imagine how many others—before the Revolution—would have envied their lot. Neither can they imagine the joy of a poor boy like me, when the curé consented to receive me, and when I said to myself, "You



will learn to read, to write, and will not live in ignorance like your poor parents."

No, one has to have felt those things, one has to have lived in those times, and the unfortunates who do not profit by such a great blessing of education are to be pitied greatly. They will one day know what it is to spend their lives in the hard service of others. They will have time to repent. I was in a way dazzled by my new happiness. I wanted to run home and tell my father and mother of my good fortune. I could hardly sit quiet.

All that comes back to me of that day besides, is that, after the omelet, Dame Catharine brought the potatoes in a small basket. They had been boiled in water and were white, with the skins bursting, and the floury insides falling out. Monsieur Christopher bent forward and asked, "What is this, Jean? Where does it come from?"

My godfather told us to taste some, and we found the tubers so good that every one about the table said he never had eaten anything half so good. The curé, hearing that they were the tubers of which the whole countryside had made fun, and that a quarter of an acre would probably yield at least fifteen bags, found it hard to believe.

"It would be too good. It can't possibly be true."

What with eating and going into raptures over it we soon could swallow no more. So Dame Catharine emptied a large pitcher of milk into a basin to help the food go down. And then you should have seen the arms go. At last Monsieur Christopher said, laying his spoon on the table, "It is enough, Jean. It is enough. One could easily eat enough to hurt himself. It is too good." We all thought as he did.

Before going the curé wanted to see our field. He

asked to be told how these Hanoverian tubers were cultivated, and when Chauvel told him that they grew even better in the sandy soil of the mountains than in the richer loam of the plains, he exclaimed:

"Listen to me, Chauvel. In bringing those parings in your basket, and you, Jean, in planting them in the ground, in spite of the mocking of the monks and other imbeciles, you have done more for our country than all the Capuchins of the three bishoprics have done in centuries. These tubers will be the bread of the poor."

He then enjoined my godfather to keep some seed for him, saying that he wanted to plant some in his garden to set a good example, and that, in two or three years, he hoped that half of the land belonging to the parish would be planted with these good tubers, after which he departed for Phalsbourg.

This is the way the potatoes were introduced into our country. I thought it would please the peasants to know it.

The following year my godfather planted them in his field on the side of the hill, and he gathered more than sixty sacks of them. But the report having spread that they caused leprosy, no one wanted to buy any, excepting Létumier of Baraques and two laborers who lived on the mountain. Fortunately, the following autumn the news came through the paper that some good man called Parmentier had planted some of the tubers in the vicinity of Paris, and that he had presented a few to the king and that His Majesty had eaten of them. Then everybody wanted some, and Master Leroux, whom the people's stupidity had made angry, sold them the seed at a very high price.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ACCOUNTING OF NECKER

It is from that time that I began to live. He who knows nothing and has no means of learning, passes over the earth like a poor beast of burden. He works for others, he enriches his master, and when he is old and feeble, one gets rid of him.

Every morning at break of day father awakened me. My brothers and sisters were still sleeping. I dressed without making a noise and went out with my little bag, my feet thrust into my wooden shoes, a big carter's bonnet over my ears, and my billet of wood under my arm. It was quite cold at the beginning of winter, and I closed the door and went on my way blowing on my fingers.

How everything comes back to me after so many years! The path that rose and descended again, the old trees bare of leaves, standing bordering the roadside, the great silence of winter in the forest, and the village church of Lutzelbourg at the bottom of the valley, with its pointed spire whose weather vane seemed lost in the clouds, the little cemetery farther down with its snow-covered graves, the old houses, the river, Père Oirvins' water-mill which clattered over the big sluice—is it possible that the things of one's childhood live in the memory when all the rest is so quickly forgotten?

I generally came before any of the others. I entered the empty room. The mother of the Curé Christopher, a

little woman weazened and bent over, with red woolen skirt pinned up almost to the middle of her back, after the Alsatian fashion, a bonnet shaped like a cushion on her head—Madame Madeleine—alert as a mouse, had already lighted the fire. I lay my billet near the stove and my sabots on top to dry them. Everything stands before my eyes, the whitewashed beams, the little benches in line, the big blackboard against the wall between two windows, and way down at the other end the curé's pulpit, on a little raised platform, and above it the big crucifix.

Each boy had to sweep in his turn, but I began while waiting for the others. They came from Hultenhäusen, from Baraques, and even from Chèvrehof.

It was there that I became acquainted with all of these my old comrades, Louis Frossard, the son of the mayor; he died young during the Revolution; Alois Clément, who was killed by grape-shot at Valmy (he was lieutenant as early as '92); Dominique Clausse, who afterwards set up as a carpenter at Saverne; François Mayer, head tailor of the Sixth Hussars (in 1820 he retired very rich, so they say, but where I do not know); Antoine Thomas, one of the chiefs of battalion in the Old Guard, how many times he came to see me on the farm after 1815, and we retold the old-time stories; I always gave him the chamber of honor upstairs; Jacques Messier, who was general guard of the streams and the forest; Hubert Perrin, who had charge of the post station at Héming; and fifty others who would never have amounted to anything but for the Revolution.

Before '89, the son of the shoemaker remained a shoemaker, the son of the woodcutter also had to cut wood; no one ventured out of his class. After thirty or forty years had passed you found them in the same place, doing

the same things, a little stouter perhaps, possibly a trifle thinner. That was all. But to-day one may elevate himself by his courage and his good sense; he need never despair of anything. The son of the simple peasant, provided he has the talent and managerial ability, may come to rule France. Let us thank the Lord for having lightened our days, and rejoice over this blessed change!

But to return to my old-time comrades of school-days. Now they have all gone. Last year there were only two of us: Joseph Broussousse, the hatter of Phalsbourg, and myself. Whenever I wanted to buy a straw hat in the spring my stout friend Broussousse recognized my voice in his shop. He would always come out limping and shouting, "Hello, there! It is Michel Bastien!"

Then it was absolutely necessary to go into the back room, and together empty a bottle of his old Burgundy. And Broussousse, in leading me back, never failed to remark: "Come, let us go! things still go on, Michel! But listen! When I take my passport for the final journey you will have to be examining yours. Ha, ha, ha!" And he would laugh.

Poor Broussousse! Last autumn we had to take him to his final rest, and yet I do not want to have my passport viséed. No, I must finish this story, and then I shall invent something else to gain time. We are not in a hurry. There is always time to lift the foot properly.

In short, it was at the Curé Christopher's that I became acquainted with all these old friends, and many others whose names may come back to me later on. On the stroke of eight they would come in single file, saying: "Good morning, Monsieur Christopher! Good morning, Monsieur Christopher!"

He had not yet arrived, but they cried out in this way just the same. They crowded up around the stove laughing and pushing one another about. But scarcely were the heavy footsteps of the curé heard in the lane before everything was as quiet as could be. Each took his own place on the bench, his alphabet on his knee, his nose buried in it, without a murmur. For, to tell the truth, the curé did not like noise or disputes. More than once during class hours I remember having seen him get up calmly, go over to some one who had been nudging with his elbow, lift him from the bench by his collar, and throw him out of the room as though he were a kitten. There was no desire to recommence the act, and the class trembled in its skin as it watched out the corner of its eye.

The curé would arrive. Standing in the doorway he would look around to see if everything was in order. You could hear the crackling of the fire. No one stirred. Then he climbed up into his pulpit and called out to us "Begin," and all together we would sing the B-A, BA. This would go on for quite a while. Finally, the curé would call out, "Stop," and every one would be perfectly still.

Then he would call each of us in his turn, "Jacques! Michel! Nicolas! Come here!" We approached him hat in hand.

"Who created you and sent you into the world?"

"God."

"Why did God create you and send you into the world?"

"To adore him, to love him, to serve him, and in this way to win life eternal."

It was a good way to teach us. By really nothing more than listening to what the others said, at the end of three months I knew almost all my catechism.

He used to make us recite the multiplication table, by questions and answers; and then it was his custom, about eleven o'clock, to walk behind the benches and to lean over to see whether or not we were studying. When you were spelling in a low voice he would pinch you softly by the ear and say: "That's good, you will be all right." Every time he said this to me I breathed more quickly and my eyes were full of happiness. Once he said to me: "Tell Master Jean that I am pleased with you. Do you hear me? I give you this commission." That day not the mayor of the city, not the aldermen, not even the governor himself might have been my relations; but, nevertheless, I did not say a word to Master Jean for fear I should fall into the sin of vanity.

By the beginning of March I knew how to read. Unfortunately, Master Jean could not support me all the year doing nothing, and when spring came, instead of keeping at school, I had to return to the pasture. But I always carried the catechism in my bag, and while my goats were clambering over the rocks, I, quietly seated on a clump of heather, under the shade of some oak or beech tree, would go over again what the curé had taught us. And so it happened that, instead of forgetting my lessons, as the boys of Hultenhausen and Chèvrehof did—and indeed, all the others—I knew them even better at the end of autumn, and at the beginning of the winter term Monsieur Christopher put me in one of the classes of the wealthy of Lutzelbourg, whose children went to school all the year round. I learned all that was being taught at the time in

our villages: to read, to write, to figure a little; and on the 15th of March, 1781, I took my first communion. That was the end of my studies. I was then as well educated as Master Jean. As for the rest, it would come of itself, with hard work and good will.

After that my godfather took me to the forge all the time. He gave his cattle to old Yéri, the village herdsman, to guard. I continued to look after the stable, but, at the same time I was learning a trade, and a few months afterwards, when I had grown in strength, I began to really forge.

Dame Catharine and Nicole had great respect for me. In the evening, when Master Jean's eyes had become weary from gazing at the fire of the forge, it was I who read the newspapers and the little books of all sorts which Chauvel brought us. I read, but without comprehending very much. For example, when the journal spoke of the rights of the crown, the taxes on the land of the nation, and the taxes for elections, I sweat heavily, and yet it did not get into my head what was meant. I knew quite well that it was the money which had to be given to the king, but I did not understand the manner in which he took it from us.

As to all those matters which concerned our own neighborhood, that was a different thing. When the journal spoke of the excise duties, as I went every week to the town to buy the salt for the household at six cents a pound (which made more than twelve of our cents to-day) I could easily imagine the salt-maker shouting through his wicket at some poor devil: "You did not come last Tuesday. You are buying from smugglers. I have my eye on you. Look out!" For not only were



It was a good way to teach us. By really nothing more than listening to what the others said, at the end of three months I knew almost all my catechism.

He used to make us recite the multiplication table, by questions and answers; and then it was his custom, about eleven o'clock, to walk behind the benches and to lean over to see whether or not we were studying. When you were spelling in a low voice he would pinch you softly by the ear and say: "That's good, you will be all right." Every time he said this to me I breathed more quickly and my eyes were full of happiness. Once he said to me: "Tell Master Jean that I am pleased with you. Do you hear me? I give you this commission." That day not the mayor of the city, not the aldermen, not even the governor himself might have been my relations; but, nevertheless, I did not say a word to Master Jean for fear I should fall into the sin of vanity.

By the beginning of March I knew how to read. Unfortunately, Master Jean could not support me all the year doing nothing, and when spring came, instead of keeping at school, I had to return to the pasture. But I always carried the catechism in my bag, and while my goats were clambering over the rocks, I, quietly seated on a clump of heather, under the shade of some oak or beech tree, would go over again what the curé had taught us. And so it happened that, instead of forgetting my lessons, as the boys of Hulthenhausen and Chèvrehof did—and indeed, all the others—I knew them even better at the end of autumn, and at the beginning of the winter term Monsieur Christopher put me in one of the classes of the wealthy of Lutzelbourg, whose children went to school all the year round. I learned all that was being taught at the time in

our villages: to read, to write, to figure a little; and on the 15th of March, 1781, I took my first communion. That was the end of my studies. I was then as well educated as Master Jean. As for the rest, it would come of itself, with hard work and good will.

After that my godfather took me to the forge all the time. He gave his cattle to old Yéri, the village herdsman, to guard. I continued to look after the stable, but, at the same time I was learning a trade, and a few months afterwards, when I had grown in strength, I began to really forge.

Dame Catharine and Nicole had great respect for me. In the evening, when Master Jean's eyes had become weary from gazing at the fire of the forge, it was I who read the newspapers and the little books of all sorts which Chauvel brought us. I read, but without comprehending very much. For example, when the journal spoke of the rights of the crown, the taxes on the land of the nation, and the taxes for elections, I sweat heavily, and yet it did not get into my head what was meant. I knew quite well that it was the money which had to be given to the king, but I did not understand the manner in which he took it from us.

As to all those matters which concerned our own neighborhood, that was a different thing. When the journal spoke of the excise duties, as I went every week to the town to buy the salt for the household at six cents a pound (which made more than twelve of our cents to-day) I could easily imagine the salt-maker shouting through his wicket at some poor devil: "You did not come last Tuesday. You are buying from smugglers. I have my eye on you. Look out!" For not only were

It was a good way to teach us. By really nothing more than listening to what the others said, at the end of three months I knew almost all my catechism.

He used to make us recite the multiplication table, by questions and answers; and then it was his custom, about eleven o'clock, to walk behind the benches and to lean over to see whether or not we were studying. When you were spelling in a low voice he would pinch you softly by the ear and say: "That's good, you will be all right." Every time he said this to me I breathed more quickly and my eyes were full of happiness. Once he said to me: "Tell Master Jean that I am pleased with you. Do you hear me? I give you this commission." That day not the mayor of the city, not the aldermen, not even the governor himself might have been my relations; but, nevertheless, I did not say a word to Master Jean for fear I should fall into the sin of vanity.

By the beginning of March I knew how to read. Unfortunately, Master Jean could not support me all the year doing nothing, and when spring came, instead of keeping at school, I had to return to the pasture. But I always carried the catechism in my bag, and while my goats were clambering over the rocks, I, quietly seated on a clump of heather, under the shade of some oak or beech tree, would go over again what the curé had taught us. And so it happened that, instead of forgetting my lessons, as the boys of Hultenhausen and Chèvrehof did—and indeed, all the others—I knew them even better at the end of autumn, and at the beginning of the winter term Monsieur Christopher put me in one of the classes of the wealthy of Lutzelbourg, whose children went to school all the year round. I learned all that was being taught at the time in

our villages: to read, to write, to figure a little; and on the 15th of March, 1781, I took my first communion. That was the end of my studies. I was then as well educated as Master Jean. As for the rest, it would come of itself, with hard work and good will.

After that my godfather took me to the forge all the time. He gave his cattle to old Yéri, the village herdsman, to guard. I continued to look after the stable, but, at the same time I was learning a trade, and a few months afterwards, when I had grown in strength, I began to really forge.

Dame Catharine and Nicole had great respect for me. In the evening, when Master Jean's eyes had become weary from gazing at the fire of the forge, it was I who read the newspapers and the little books of all sorts which Chauvel brought us. I read, but without comprehending very much. For example, when the journal spoke of the rights of the crown, the taxes on the land of the nation, and the taxes for elections, I sweat heavily, and yet it did not get into my head what was meant. I knew quite well that it was the money which had to be given to the king, but I did not understand the manner in which he took it from us.

As to all those matters which concerned our own neighborhood, that was a different thing. When the journal spoke of the excise duties, as I went every week to the town to buy the salt for the household at six cents a pound (which made more than twelve of our cents to-day) I could easily imagine the salt-maker shouting through his wicket at some poor devil: "You did not come last Tuesday. You are buying from smugglers. I have my eye on you. Look out!" For not only were

we compelled to buy salt at the excise office, at a much higher price than it was worth, but we had to buy so much per person per week.

When it was a question of tithes, I could imagine the Paulist with his pole and his wagons crying out from a distance over the fields during harvest-time: "Hey, there! Be careful of that eleventh!" Then, when it was going to storm, we had to arrange the grain stacks all in line, and the Paulist would come deliberately, pick out from under your very nose the best sheaves, and throw them on his own pile. That was quite clear to me. I understood also the duties on drinks, a thirteenth on sales, the turnpike dues, the imposts on shipping of all kinds of merchandise, the general imposts and the reserved imposts, the tariff duties, the dockage, imposts of entry, octroi, and the rest. I had only to bring to my mind the toll-gates, the markets, the city hall and the controllers, the markers, the gaugers, the wine brokers, the tasters of brandy, of beer, the appraisers of hay, the bottlers, the tax-gatherers on measures, the judicial measurers, the inspectors of hogs, of butcher shops, and a thousand other employees, coming, going, feeling, looking, opening, unpacking, arresting, worrying, and confiscating—all this I understood very well.

Chauvel explained the rest to me. "You would like to know what an election district is?" he said, from his comfortable seat behind the stove. "That is not difficult to understand, Michel. An election district is one of the old provinces of France, one of the first, such as Paris, Soissons, Orleans, where the kings have come from. In these districts the kings' stewards are everything and do everything. They impose taxes as they please; they set

the price on donkeys to suit themselves; they are the masters. No one dares to cheat or to complain. Complaints which are made against them come back to these very fellows for settlement!

"Formerly the districts themselves named the assessors; they arranged their burden so that it would cause the least possible discomfort. They elected their own assessors, and for this reason the provinces were called election districts. But for two hundred years now the kings' stewards have appointed the assessors. It is more convenient for them that way." He winked at me. "Do you understand, Michel?"

"Oh yes, Master Chauvel."

"And then for the public lands, or for conquered lands, such as our own Lorraine and Alsace, or such as Brittany and Burgundy, it is different. Here the stewards do not count for everything. The nobles and the bishops gather together from time to time in provincial assemblies. They vote the taxes, first on behalf of the province as its share in the expenses of the whole kingdom—the free gift, what belonged to the king—then, for their own particular expenses, for their roads, their water-courses, their buildings. Before these are paid the country has laid down its conditions; the nobles and bishops of our provinces, you understand, have their articles of agreement, they have preserved their advantages and privileges. But we poor devils, we pay, it is our right. No one will take it from us—not that right. We pay not only as before for our own provinces, but since the agreement, we pay over and above, the imposts for the king. This is the clearest of our benefits. Do you understand, Michel?"

"Yes."



"Well, then, try not to forget it."

Master Jean would get indignant. "But this is unjust," he would say, pounding his fist on the table. "No, that is not just. Are we all Frenchmen, yes or no? Are we of the same blood and of the same nation? Why, then, do some vote their own imposts, while others always pay, pay? Should not the advantages and the costs be shared in common?"

"Without a doubt," Chauvel would answer, quietly. "And the toll-gates, the taxes, the subsidies, and corvées, and all these imposts that weigh heaviest on the poor, and the nobles and the monasteries, and the tradespeople who are trying to become nobles, do not pay anything, or next to nothing. All this is not just either. But what is the use of talking about it? We cannot change anything." He never lost his temper.

I remember him often telling us of the hardships of his parents with great calmness, how they had been driven from Rochelle, how their lands and money and houses had been confiscated, and how they had been persecuted all over France, had had their children taken from them by force to be brought up in the Catholic religion, how, later on, at Lixheim, dragoons had been sent to convert them by cuts of the saber, how his father had taken refuge in the forest of Graufthal, where the mother and the children followed him the next day, renouncing everything rather than their religion, how the grandfather had been sent to the galleys of Dunkerque, where for thirteen years he remained with his foot chained night and day to the bench with a real felon for master, who beat them so cruelly that a great many of the Calvinists died of it. When a battle was on, these unfortunate galley slaves had to sit on the

bench without being able to move while the English were pointing their cannon loaded to the mouth straight at them—not four paces off. They saw the fuse ignited, and then the balls, the nails, and the grape-shot having passed, how their masters would tear off their wounded limbs from the chains and throw them into the sea and sweep off the rest. He would tell all these things which made us shudder while he was rolling a bit of snuff in the palm of his hand, and little Marguerite, quite pale, would look at him in silence out of her great black eyes. He always ended up by saying, “Yes, this is what the Chauvels owe to the Bourbons, to the great King Louis XIV, and Louis XV, the Well Beloved. It’s a queer story, that of ours, is it not? Even I, to-day, I am good for nothing; I have no civil existence. Our good king, just like the others, when he ascended the throne, surrounded by his bishops and archbishops, swore to exterminate us: ‘I swear to apply myself honestly and with all my power to exterminate from my subject lands the heretics, namely, those condemned by the Church.’ Your curés who legalize all acts of life and who ought to be for all Frenchmen alike, refuse to give us certificates of birth, marriage, and death. The law forbids us to be school-masters, judges, councilors. We can only roll on in the world like animals. All the roots by which men live are cut for us in advance, and yet we do harm to no one. Every one must acknowledge that we are honest folk.”

Master Jean would answer: “This is abominable, Chauvel. But what about Christian charity? ”

“Christian charity? We always practice it,” he would say, “fortunately for our tormentors. If we had not



practiced it! . . . . But everything is paid for in the long run, with compound interest. Everything must be paid, if not in one year then in ten, if not in ten then in a hundred, if not in a hundred then in a thousand—everything must be paid.” One can see from this that Chauvel would not have contented himself, like Master Jean, with a little amelioration, a little lightening of the imposts or of the laws. It was enough to look at his pale face, at his small, sharp, black eyes, his thin, hooked nose, his lips narrow and compressed, his spare back bent from carrying the pack, his small nervous legs and arms, tough and wiry, to think: “This little man wants all or nothing. He has all the patience needful. He will risk the galleys a thousand times to sell the books after his own heart. He fears nothing, he mistrusts everything, and if necessity should arise, it would not be pleasant to stand out against him. His little girl already resembles him. Such people are broken, but never bent.”

Without thinking of all those things—for I was then too young—I felt it within me. I had a great deal of respect for Père Chauvel. I always pulled off my bonnet to him the moment I saw him, and said to myself, “He wants the good of the peasants, and we are together.”

Our newspapers spoke also at that time of a deficit, and frequently my godfather would exclaim that he could not understand why there should be a deficit, that the people always paid their taxes, that his taxes were not lessened by a single farthing, that they were even increased from day to day, and that the deficit proved that there must be some thieves, that our good king would do well to look for them, that they could not be people of our class, for once the money for the imposts levied, the peasants

never saw a single cent of it, near at hand or far off. One had to believe that the thieves were around the king.


Valentine then raised his hands and said: "Oh, Master Jean, Master Jean! What are you thinking of? About His Majesty the king there are only princes, dukes, barons, and bishops, most honorable folk, who place honor far above riches."

"That will do," said Master Jean, shortly. "Think what you please and I will think what suits me. You will not make me believe that the peasants, the workmen, and even the bourgeois—who never touch anything but to pay—are the cause of the deficit. Therefore, if it is not the princes, it must be their lackeys."

My godfather was right, for before the Revolution the people could not send deputies to audit the accounts. The seigniors and the bishops had everything in their own hands and were responsible for everything.

But, to tell the truth, no one was quite sure of the deficit. People talked of it, and sometimes they spoke of it in the journals in an indirect way, when the king appointed as minister a merchant from Geneva called Necker. This man, after the manner of merchants who do not want to fall into bankruptcy, had the idea of casting up the accounts of the whole kingdom, on one side the gains, on the other the expenses. The newspapers called it the accounting of Monsieur Necker. It was the first time in centuries that the peasants were told what had become of their money. The rendering of accounts to those who paid was a merchant's idea, and the seigniors, the abbots, and the monks were too proud or too saintly to have such ideas.

When I think of the accounting of Monsieur Necker it



all seems like a dream. Master Jean talked of it every night: the American war, Washington, Rochambeau, Lafayette, the battles on the Indian Ocean—all these were laid aside for that accounting, which he threshed over, raising his hands and groaning. "House of the king and queen, so much; house of the princes, so much; Swiss regiments, so much; salaries of receivers, farmers, paymasters, stewards, so much; communities, so much; religious buildings, so much; allowance for the private purse of the sovereign, so much"; and always in millions. I never saw a man more indignant. "Ah, now," he shouted, "one can see where our great poverty comes from. One can see why so many thousands of men perish from cold and hunger, and why so much land remains untilled. Ah, now one can understand it all. Good heavens! It is not enough that we miserable people give five hundred millions yearly to the king, but that there must also be fifty-six millions deficit!" To look at his face made your heart ache.

"Yes, it is hard," said Chauvel, "but one must also look upon it as a great happiness if he knows where the money goes to. Formerly we asked ourselves, What becomes of that mass of money, what is done with it? Does it fall into the sea? Now, when we pay the thousand taxes of all sorts, we will know what becomes of them."

Then Master Jean would answer, angrily: "You are right. It will be very pleasant to think, I am working to buy palaces for Monsieur de Soubise. I deprive myself of everything that Monsignor the Count d'Artois may give feasts that cost two hundred thousand francs. I labor from morning till night that the queen may give to the

first noble beggar who comes ten times more than I have earned in all my life. That will comfort us greatly." Nevertheless, the thought that accounts were to be rendered to us pleased him. And when the first moment of anger had passed, he said: "Since Turgot, we have not had such a good minister. Monsieur Necker is an honest man. He follows out the ideas of the other, who also wanted to make the lot of the people easier, to lessen the taxes, to abolish the trade wardens, and to render accounts. The great seigniors and the bishops forced him to resign. Let us hope they will not be able to do the same with Monsieur Necker, and that our good king will sustain him. Now those who have been ruining us will be a little ashamed, and they will not dare continue their criminal expenditures. When they will pass by a poor man working in the fields, they will not be able to refrain from blushing. When they will see the unfortunate man looking upon them with contempt, they will think: This man must have the accounting of Monsieur Necker. He knows that his labor has paid for these plumes, these horses, this carriage, and these lackeys, and that I am really but a beggar."

What caused Master Jean to rejoice most was that Necker ended his account by saying that, "to pay the deficit it was necessary to abolish the privileges of the monasteries and the seignories, and to exact from them the same taxes that the peasants paid." "This is the finest thing of all," he said. "Monsieur Necker certainly has very good ideas."

The rumor of some great change spread over the whole country, the good news found its way everywhere: For more than three weeks Chauvel and his little Marguerite

did not reappear in the village, and during all that time, they only sold the accounts rendered by Monsieur Necker. He got them at Pont-à-Mousson for Lorraine and at Kehl for Alsace. I do not remember how many of these little books they sold. Marguerite told me, but it was so long ago.

On market days one heard talk of the abolition of the privileges and the equalizing of the imposts—only this.

“Hey, Master Jean, it seems that at the end our good seigniors and the abbots will be forced to pay something.”

“Alas, yes, Nicolas. And it is that beggarly deficit that did it. The old imposts were no longer sufficient, and the people could never have made up the deficit. It is terrible, terrible. What a calamity!” And the people laughed, offering one another a pinch of snuff, while pitying the poor monks and the poor seigniors.

This was happening in '81. But the confidence did not last long. We soon learned that the Count d'Artois, the queen, Marie Antoinette, and the old minister, Maurepas, could not stand the bourgeois minister who always wanted to render accounts. The unrest made itself felt more and more. We apprehended something. On the 2d of June, 1781, on a Friday, Master Jean, having sent me to get some salt at the excise bureau, I found the whole city in a turmoil. The band of the Brie regiment was playing under the balcony of Monsieur the Marquis de Talaru. The drums were being beaten before the residence of the prevost and of the mayor. They were going by detachments as on Christmas Day, and the drummers received good tips. One would have thought it was a feast day. But the people were sad. The peddlers of fowls and vegetables sat side by side on their little

benches, not crying their wares as usual. One only heard the music on the market-place, and the drummers in the streets.

In front of the bureau of excise a great crowd pressed. Young officers, cadets as they were called, with their little hats on the side of their heads and bows of ribbon on their arms, walked about by threes and fours, laughing and playing the fool. The salt-maker counted my money, passed my bag through the wicket, and I departed.

In a corner of the market hall a few grain merchants were talking. "It's the end," one of these men was saying. "It's the end. We can no longer count on anything. The king has turned him out."

At once the thought came to me that Necker had been dismissed, for during the past three months people had talked only of him. So I hastened to return to Baraques. The old soldiers of the guard at the gate of Germany\* (porte d'Allemagne) sat as usual smoking and playing quietly at *drogue*.

When I arrived at our forge Master Jean had already learned all from the merchants returning from the city. They were still there retelling what they had heard. Godfather was shouting: "It is not possible! This is not possible! If Necker leaves, who will pay the deficit? The others will go on in the old way. They will give feasts, hunting parties, and festivals. They will throw money out of the windows, and the deficit, instead of diminishing, will increase. I tell you it is not possible."

But when I told him what I had seen: the tomfoolery of the cadets, the music before the residence of the gov-

\*The gates of the city of Phalsbourg were named after different European countries.

error, and all the rest, his thick eyebrows contracted, "Well," he said, "I see that it is true. The brave man is going. And yet I had thought that our good king would sustain him."

We would have said much more; but we did not know the people who were there standing at the door looking on and listening. He took up his coat and shouted to us: "Courage! Let us work hard. We must pay Soubise's pension. On, boys!" He laughed so loudly that he was heard in the inn, and Dame Catharine leaned out to see what was going on.

The merchants went their way, and many others passed that day in very low spirits. Nothing more was said. Only in the evening, among ourselves, when the doors and windows had been closed, Master Jean poured out his heart: .

"Monsieur, Count d'Artois and our beautiful queen," he said, "have had the best of it. Woe to the poor man who permits a spendthrift wife to lead him. He may have all the good qualities in the world. He may love his people. He may abolish the corvées and the torture. But feasts and dances and pleasures of all sorts, he cannot abolish. On this score the extravagant woman is deaf, and will not listen. She could see everything perish, but the fêtes must continue. For this she was born. She must have compliments, bouquets, sweet perfumes. Just look at that poor notary, Régoine, a man of means, who had money from his father, his grandfather, and all his relations, and really nothing better to do than to live quietly to the age of a hundred years! Well! He had the misfortune to marry Miss Jeannette Desjardin. Then he had to run to all the fêtes, all the weddings, and

all the christenings. The carriage had to be harnessed morning and night, with two bundles of fresh straw on top, so that the women might come in state to the dance. Then at the end of five or six years the bailiffs come, empty the house, and sell the furniture; poor Régoine goes off to the galleys, while Madam Jeannette runs about the country with the Chevalier de Bazin, of the Rouergue regiment. This is what an extravagant woman will do; this is the way things end with such creatures."

The more Master Jean talked the more his anger grew. He did not dare predict that our Queen Marie Antoinette would draw us into such misfortunes, but one could see by his face what he thought. His talk lasted more than half an hour and he never ceased speaking.

Outside it was raining and the wind was blowing. It was a bad day. But we were yet to have a great fright and hear even sadder things. After nine o'clock, as Nicole was raking out the fire, and I was covering myself with a bag before running home, there were two heavy knocks on the shutters.

Master Jean had been screaming so loudly that, in spite of the rain and the wind, he could have been heard. We looked at one another without stirring, and Dame Catharine had already started to carry the lamp into the kitchen, to make it appear that we were all asleep, for the thought of gendarmes standing at the door made us all turn pale, when a big voice outside began to shout: "It is I, Jean! It is Christopher! Open!" You can imagine that we breathed again.

Master Jean went into the entry and Dame Catharine brought back the lamp.

"It is you?" Master Jean was saying.



"Yes, it is I."

"What a fright you have given us!"

They entered together at once. At a glance we saw that the curé was not pleased, for instead of greeting Dame Catharine and everybody else as usual, he paid no attention to any one, but shook the rain from his three-cornered hat exclaiming: "I come from Saverne. I have seen the famous Cardinal de Rohan. Merciful heaven! Merciful heaven! And he is a cardinal, a prince of the church! Ah, when I think of it!"

He seemed transported with indignation. The water was running down his cheeks, down to the collar of his cassock. He took the band off brusquely and put it into his pocket, all the while walking to and fro. We looked at him in surprise. He did not seem to see us, but spoke only to Master Jean.

"Yes, I have seen the prince," he cried, "this great dignitary who owes us the example of good morals and all Christian virtues. I have seen him drive his own carriage and pass at a gallop through the principal street of Saverne, among the pottery and china spread out on the ground, laughing like a madman. What a scandal!"

"You know that Necker has been dismissed?" asked Master Jean.

"Do I know it?" he rejoined, with a contemptuous smile. "Have I not just seen the superiors of all the monasteries of Alsace, the Capuchins, the Carmelites, the Barnabites, all the barefooted beggars, file out with great pomp through the antechambers of His Eminence? Ha, ha, ha!"

He strode around the room. He was covered with mud, and the rain had drenched him to the skin, but he

felt nothing. His great head of hair shook. He was talking, as it were, to himself.

"Yes, Christopher, yes. Such are the princes of the church. Go and ask the protection of monsignor for the poor father of a family. Go and complain to the one who ought to be the mainstay of the clergy. Go and tell him that the employees of the fiscal department, under pretense of looking for contraband, have penetrated even into your parsonage, that you have to give them the keys of your cellar and your cupboard. Tell him that it is humiliating to force a citizen, whoever he may be, to open his door day or night to armed men without uniform or any other mark to distinguish them from brigands; whose word will be taken in court without any one being permitted to investigate their lives and morals, when they are installed into office. Often the fortune, honor, and even the life of people are at the mercy of their unsupported word. Tell him that it is his duty to carry all these just complaints to the foot of the throne, and to endeavor to gain the release of an unfortunate man dragged off to prison because the excise commissioners have found four pounds of salt in his house. . . . Go, go! You will be well received, Christopher!"

"In the name of heaven," said Master Jean, "what has happened to you?"

Then the curé stopped for a moment and said:

"I went there to complain because of a visit from the excise commissioners at eleven o'clock last night all through our village, and the arrest of one of my parishioners, Jacob Baumgarten. It was my duty. I thought that the cardinal would understand everything, that he would pity the wretched father of six children whose crime

consisted in having bought several pounds of contraband salt, and would see that he was released. Well? First, I had to wait for two hours at the gate of his magnificent château, which the Capuchins entered as though it was their own. They went to compliment monsignor on the happy dismissal of Necker. And then they permitted me to enter into this Babylon, where pride of silk, of gold, and of precious stones showed itself everywhere, on painting and on floor. In a word, I was let wait there from eleven in the morning till five in the evening, with two poor curés of the mountains. We heard the lackeys laugh. We saw one of them, from time to time, a tall fellow dressed in red, above the gate looking at us and calling out to the others, 'The priests are still there.' I was patient. I wanted to present my complaint to monsignor, when one of these humorous fellows came to inform us that the audiences with monsignor would be resumed in a week. The beggar laughed."

While he was saying this, the Curé Christopher took his great holly staff in his hands and broke it as he would a match. His face became terrible to look at.

"The villain ought to have his face slapped," said Master Jean.

"If we had been alone," answered the curé, "I would have taken him by the ears and I would have fixed him. But, there! I have made the sacrifice of my humiliation to the Lord."

Then he began to pace again. We all pitied him. Dame Catharine went to get him some bread and wine, and he ate it while standing. Suddenly his anger seemed to die away. "But I shall never forget these things," he said. "The humiliation of justice exists everywhere.

The people do everything and the others only commit insolences. They trample upon all virtues, they despise religion. It is the sons of the poor who defend them. It is the sons of the poor who feed them. And it is still the sons of the poor, like me, who preach the respect for their riches, their dignities, and even for their scandals. How long can this last? I do not know, but it cannot last forever. It is contrary to nature, it is contrary to the will of God. It is an act against conscience to preach respect for that which merits blame. There must be an end of this, for it is written 'Those who keep my commandments enter into my kingdom, but without will be the shameless, the liars, the idolaters; whoever loves falsehood and commits it.' "

The same evening the Curé Christopher returned to his village. We remained very sad, and Master Jean told us before we separated: "All these nobles only think of themselves. When they are obliged to use one of us, be it as a priest or a workman or a soldier, they humiliate us, and then get rid of us as soon as possible. Well, they are in the wrong. Now that every one knows that there is a deficit, things will have to be changed. Every one knows that the money comes from the people, and the people are going to get tired of working for princes and cardinals of this sort."

I returned to our hut after ten, and all these thoughts followed me, even into my sleep. I had the same thoughts as Master Jean, Chauvel, and Monsieur le Curé, but the time had not yet arrived. We still had to suffer a great deal before our deliverance would come.

## CHAPTER VI

### NICOLAS BRINGS THE FAMILY TO GRIEF

The saddest thing that comes back to me of all the stories of Necker, the queen, and the Count d'Artois, is the great destitution of my parents, who worked continually, and yet always fell back into want in winter. Étienne had grown and the poor child worked with father, but weak and suffering, he hardly earned enough for his food. Claude was shepherd at the monastery of the Tiercelins of Lixheim. Nicolas worked in the forest as woodcutter. He was a good workman, but unfortunately loved to drink and to brawl on Sundays in the inns, and gave mother hardly anything. Lisbeth and our little sister Mathurine waited on the officers and the fine ladies of the city at the Tivoli. But that only happened once a week. On Sundays and the other days they begged on the highways. For we did not have any factories in those days. There were no hoods to knit, nor skirts, nor capes of fine wool in our villages. They did not make straw hats by the thousands for Paris, Germany, Italy, and America. Frequently the children came to eighteen years of age without having earned two farthings.

But the worst was that our debt increased continually, and that it amounted to more than nine gros of six francs each, and that Monsieur Robin came regularly to knock on our window every three months, to tell my father that he had such and such a *corvée* to perform. This was our

bugbear. The rest seemed nothing to compare with this misfortune. We did not know that, through the general farms, the taxes and the tolls we were being compelled to pay ten times more for the necessities of life than they were worth, that for a piece of bread we paid the price of a loaf, for a pound of salt the price of ten pounds, and that it ruined us.

We did not know that at twenty-five leagues from us, in Switzerland, with the same labor we could have lived far better and laid something by besides. No, the poor peasants have never understood the indirect contributions. What is taken from them in money at the end of the year, even if but twenty cents, makes them indignant, but if they only knew what they are made to pay from day to day for their necessities they would cry a little louder.

But to-day it is next to nothing. The toll-gates are abolished and the employees have been reduced by three-quarters. But in those days, what robbery, what misery!

Ah, how I wished to be able to lighten my parents' burdens, and it filled me with joy when I thought, "Next year Master Jean will give me three francs a month, and we will be able to pay off the debt slowly." This gave me double strength, and I dreamed of it night and day.

At last, after so much suffering, something really good happened to us. Nicolas, when called for the conscription, drew a white ballot. In those days, instead of numbers ballots were drawn, black and white, and only those who held black ones were taken. What happiness! At once the idea to sell Nicolas occurred to our mother. He was five feet six inches. He could serve in the grenadiers. Surely that was worth more than nine gros. As long as I live I shall never forget the joy of our family.

Mother was holding Nicolas by the arm and was saying to him, "We are going to sell you. Many married men have drawn bad numbers, and you can replace one of them."

One could only replace married men, but then one had to serve double the time: twelve years instead of six. Nicolas knew this as well as mother, but he replied just the same, "As you will. I am always happy."

Father would rather have kept him. He said that, by woodcutting and by working out the *corvées* in the winter, one could make money and pay off the debts. But mother took him off to one side and whispered in his ear, "Listen, Jean-Pierre. If Nicolas remains, he will marry. I know he is paying court to that little Jeannette Loris. If they marry they will have children, and that will be the worst of all for us."

Then father, his eyes full of tears, asked, "You are willing to be a substitute, are you, Nicolas? Do you wish to go?"

And Nicolas, with a red ribbon on his old three-cornered hat, cried, "Yes, I go! I ought to pay the debt! I am the eldest, and it is for me to pay the debt."

He was a brave lad. Mother embraced him and told him she knew well he loved his parents, she had known this for a long time. He would become a grenadier, and come back to the village with a white uniform, a blue collar the color of the sky, and a pompon on his hat. "That's good, that's good," responded Nicolas.

He saw through his mother's cleverness, she thinking only of the brood to come, but he pretended to see nothing. And, besides, he loved war.

Father sat near the hearth, his head between his hands

weeping. He yearned to keep them all around him. But mother leaned on his shoulder, and while brothers and sisters shouted from the door to call the neighbors, she whispered in his ear:

"Listen. We will have more than nine gros. Nicolas has six inches over the five feet, and inches are paid for separately. That will make twelve louis. We will buy a cow, will have some milk and butter and cheese, and we will be able to fatten a pig."

He did not answer, and seemed sad all that day. The next day they nevertheless went together to the city, and in spite of his grief when he came back, father said that Nicolas would replace the son of the baker Josse, that he would serve twelve years, and that we would get twelve louis, one for each year of service; that Robin would be paid first, and that then—we would see.

He wanted to give one or two louis to Nicolas, but mother wouldn't hear of it, saying that the boy was not in need of anything, that he would have his good meal every day, that he would be well clothed, that he would even have shoes and stockings like all the soldiers, and that if he had money he would spend it in the inn and be punished for it.

Nicolas laughed, and answered: "Well, well, I am willing."

Only our father was grieved. But you must not think that mother was pleased or happy to see Nicolas going. She loved him much, but great poverty hardens the heart, and she was thinking of the smaller ones, of Mathurine and Étienne, and twelve louis was a fortune in those days.

Things then were arranged thus. The papers had to be signed at the mayor's office during the week. Every



morning Nicolas would go to the city, and naturally, as he was going to replace the son of the house, Père Josse who kept the inn of the Great Elk, opposite the gate of Germany, gave him sausages and sauerkraut, and did not stint the flow of wine. Nicolas spent all his time in laughing and singing with his comrades who also replaced bourgeois.

As for me, I worked with renewed courage. Now at least the nine gros we owed Robin would be paid. We were going to be rid of that rascal forever. I could not help rejoicing all day while striking the anvil, and Master Jean and Valentine and every one in the household understood my joy.

One morning as the sledges were swinging at a gallop, and the sparks were flying right and left, suddenly at the door appeared a strapping six-footer, a brigadier of the Royal-Allemand regiment with a big fur bonnet on his ear, his blue uniform buttoned over a chamois cloth vest, yellow leather breeches, big boots reaching up to the knees, and a saber at his belt. He shouted: "Hallo! Good morning, Cousin Jean, good morning!" He was as proud as a colonel.

"Ah, it is you, you good for nothing rogue! You haven't got yourself hanged yet?"

The other then began to laugh, and answered: "You are always the same, Cousin Jean, always joking. Aren't you going to treat me to a bottle of Rikewir?"

"When I work it is not to moisten the throat of fellows of your kind," answered Master Jean, turning his back on him. "Come on, boys, to work!" And as we began to forge again the brigadier went out laughing and dragging his saber.

It was indeed the cousin of Master Jean, his cousin Jerome, of Quatre-Vents. But he had played so many bad tricks before leaving the country and enlisting that his family would have nothing to do with him. The rogue had a leave of absence of six weeks, and if I am telling you this, it is because the very next day when I went to buy our salt, I heard some one call in the market hall: "Michel, Michell!" I turned around and saw Nicolas with this great scapegrace before the tavern of the Bear at the entrance of the lane of the Red Heart. Nicolas took me by the arm and said, "You will come and drink with us."

"Let us rather go to Josse," I said.

"Oh, I have enough of sauerkraut," he answered. "Come on!" And, as I spoke of money to him, the other shouted, "Don't let's talk of that; I love my country, boys. This is my affair." Then we had to go in and drink.

Old Ursula brought everything one wanted, wine, brandy, and cheese. But I had no time to lose, and this sort of a hole filled with soldiers and militiamen, who smoked, shouted, and sang together, was not to my taste. Another from Baraques, the little Jean Rat, who played the clarionet, was with us. He also drank at the expense of the Royal-Allemand. Two or three old soldiers, veterans, with their old wigs screwed on their heads, great hats tilted, and noses, cheeks, and in fact all their faces covered with red blotches, sat around the table with their elbows far apart, and the end of their black pipes between their stumpy teeth. They were all that could be imagined of dirt, shabbiness, and drunkenness. They called Nicolas "Thou," and he called them the same. Two or

three times I saw them winking their eyes at the Royal-Allemand, and whenever Nicolas said anything they all laughed and shouted: "Ha, ha, ha! that's it! Ha, ha, ha! that's it!"

I did not know what it all meant. I was very much astonished, all the more because the other kept on paying.

Outside they were beating the rappel at the infantry barracks. The soldiers of the Swiss regiment of Schoenau were running by. For the last few days they had been replacing the regiment of Brie. All the Swiss wore red as the French soldiers wore white. But the old ones, who were called pensioned veterans, belonged to no regiment, and did not stir from the tavern. The Royal-Allemand asked me how old I was, I answered fourteen. After that he did not speak to me again.

Nicolas then began to sing, and I, seeing that more and more people were coming in, and that it was becoming stifling, took my bag from the bench and hurried back to Baraques. This happened the day before that on which they were to sign the papers at the town hall. That night Nicolas did not return home. Father was very anxious, especially when in the evening I told him what I had seen. But mother said: "Oh, that is nothing. A boy must have a good time. Nicolas will not be able to return every day now. He might as well make the most of his time and enjoy himself since others are paying for it."

But father was thoughtful. Brothers and sisters had long been asleep, and mother climbed up the ladder, leaving us alone near the hearth. Father said nothing. He was thinking. At last he said, "Let us go to bed, Michel. Let us try to sleep. To-morrow morning I will

go. We must finish this affair. We must sign, since we have promised." He also went up the ladder, while I began to undress, when I heard footsteps coming toward our hut through the little lane in the garden. Father then came down again, saying, "Here is Nicolas." He opened the door, but instead of my brother, there entered little Jean Rat. He was all pale and said, "Listen, you must not be frightened, but a misfortune has befallen you."

"What is it?" asked father, tremblingly.

"Your Nicolas is in the city jail for disorder. He nearly killed that big Jerome of the Royal-Allemand with a pitcher. I had told him to be careful, and to do as I do. For the last three years I have been drinking at the expense of these recruiting agents. They all want to entrap me, but I will not sign. I let them pay and never sign."

"Oh, my God, my God," cried my father, "must all the misfortunes fall on us?"

I could not contain myself, but sat there in the corner of the hearth. Mother arose and everybody was awake.

"He signed what?" asked father. "Tell us what? He could not since we had promised to Josse. He could not sign."

"Well, what will you?" said Jean Rat. "It was neither his fault nor mine. We both had drank too much. The agents told him to sign, and though I winked at him not to do so, he no longer saw clearly, and did not understand. I had to go out for a moment, and when I returned he had already signed, and the Royal-Allemand was putting a paper in his pocket and laughing. Then I drew Nicolas outside into the kitchen and said to him,

'You have signed? Yes, but you will not have your twelve louis, you will only get a hundred francs. You have been trapped.' Suddenly he became furious. He reëntered the room and told the other to tear up the paper. The Royal-Allemand laughed in his face. What more can I tell you? Your Nicolas turned everything topsy-turvey. He held the Royal-Allemand and one of the veterans by the necktie. Everything shook in the place, everything fell to the floor. The old woman cried, 'Call the guard.' I was behind the table near the wall. I could do nothing and could not run away. Jerome drew his saber, and then Nicolas grabbed a pitcher and struck him such a blow on the head that the pitcher broke into a thousand pieces, and that rascal, the Royal-Allemand, stretched himself at full length near the overturned stove among the bottles, goblets, and pitchers that rolled under foot. The guard just came in, and I only had time to sneak away through the stable behind, on Synagogue Street. As I turned the corner I saw Nicolas in the midst of the guard near the archway. The street was full of people, and you could not approach him. The people said that the Royal-Allemand was three-quarters dead. But he ought not to have drawn his saber. Nicolas could not allow himself to be killed. This Jerome is the cause of everything, I shall swear to it if I am called. He is the cause of everything.'

While Jean Rat was telling us of this misfortune, we were all prostrated. We said nothing, for we could not say anything. Only mother raised both her hands, and all at once everyone melted into tears. What I remember as most sad was, not only that we all were ruined, but that Nicolas was in prison.

If the gates of the town had not been closed, father would have gone out at once; but it was necessary to wait in our misery until morning. The neighbors, who had already retired, arose one after the other at our cries. As they came in Jean Rat told them the story; and we all, seated on our old chest of furze, wept with our hands between our knees. Ah, the rich folks did not know misfortune! No, everything falls on the poor; everything is against them.

At first mother cried out against Nicolas, and then she wailed and wept. In the early morning father took his stick, and would have gone out alone, but I told him to wait, that Master Jean would get up; that he would give us good advice, and that perhaps he would go with us to arrange the matter. And so we waited, and at five o'clock, just as the forge was lit, we reached the inn.

Master Jean was already up in his shirt sleeves in the large room. He was much astonished to see us, and when we had told him of our misfortune and prayed him to aid us, his anger was great.

"What can one do for that?" he asked. "Your Nicolas is a brawler, and the other, my rascal of a cousin, is still worse. How can we manage this? Things must take their course, and the prevost will take a hand in it. In any case, the best that could happen would be to see that your bad penny is on his way to his regiment, since he has permitted himself to be foolishly entrapped."

He was quite right. But, as my father cried bitter tears, Master Jean put on his Sunday clothes, and took his stick, saying: "Come, you are such a brave man that one really must aid you if it is at all possible. But I cannot hope for very much."

He told his wife that we would return about nine o'clock, and gave some orders to Valentine about the forge. Then we left with bowed heads. From time to time Master Jean said:

"What shall we do? He has made his mark before a witness. He is a man of six inches above the five feet, solid as boxwood. Will they let such a simpleton go when he has permitted himself to be taken? Here you have the best soldiers; the less brain they have the braver they are. And this other scapegrace, would he have gotten his six weeks' leave of absence if it were not to entrap the boys of our country? Would he not be shut up if he did not bring in at least one or two to the Royal-Allemand? I don't see what can be done."

The more he talked the sadder we became. Nevertheless, once in the town, Master Jean took courage, and said: "Let us first go to the hospital. I know the old superintendent, Jacques Pelletier. We will get permission to see my cousin, and if he will return us the signed paper, all will be well. Let me see to it."

Already we were following along the ramparts, and we arrived before the old hospital, between the bastions of the gate of France and that of Poudrière. Master Jean pulled a little bell at the door where a sentinel walked day and night, and an infirmary attendant opened the door. My godfather entered, telling us to wait. The sentinel kept walking back and forth. Father and I leaned against the wall of the garden and looked up at the old windows with a sadness which cannot be imagined.

In a quarter of an hour Master Jean reappeared at the door and signaled us to come in. The sentinel let us pass, and we entered the great corridor, then went up the

stairs and mounted nearly to the roof. An attendant walked before us. He opened one of the rooms which was apart from the rest, where Jerome lay in a little bed, his head so bound up that if you had not seen the end of his nose and his moustaches you would not have recognized him.

He had raised himself on his elbow, and was looking at us from under his night cap and throwing his head back.

"Hello, good morning, Jerome," said Master Jean to him. "This morning I have heard of your accident, and it has grieved me greatly."

Jerome did not answer. He did not look quite so proud and gay as he had two days before.

"It is very unfortunate," continued my godfather, "you nearly had your head split open. But, fortunately, it will not amount to anything. The major said it would not be anything. Only you will not be able to drink wine or brandy for at least a fortnight. Then everything will get into working order again."

Still Jerome did not answer. At last he looked at us, and said, "You have something to ask of me. What is it?"

"Here, cousin, I see with pleasure that you are not as ill as they told us you were," replied Master Jean. "These poor unfortunates come from Baraques. They are the father and brother of Nicolas."

"Ah, ha," cried the rogue, lying down again, "I understand. They come to ask me to give back the enlistment papers of that other fellow. But I would rather let you cut my throat. Ah, the bandit! Ah, you want to strangle people! Ah, you rabble! I only hope I shall have you in my company and I will make you



suffer." He ground his teeth and turned over, drawing the sheet over his shoulder so as not to see us.

"Listen a bit, Jerome," said Master Jean.

"Go to the devil!" said the rogue.

Then Master Jean grew angry, and said, "You do not want to give us back the paper?"

"Go and get yourself hanged," yelled the rogue.

The attendant himself told us to depart, fearing that anger would choke him, but before going out, Master Jean shouted, "I thought you were very bad, cousin. I considered you as the lowest of the low, since you sold your father's wagon and oxen before enlisting. But at this moment I wish you were up and well that I might give you a cuff on the ear, for you are not worth any more." He would have said more had not the attendant pulled him out and shut the door. We came down disconsolate. Our last hope had vanished.

When we got down before the hospital, Master Jean said to us:

"Well, you see, it was time and trouble lost. Your Nicolas will no doubt remain in jail until the moment of departure. He will have to pay all the costs out of his premium, and you will get nothing." And suddenly, despite our sadness, he began to laugh and wiped his eyes, saying:

"Anyway, he has beautifully fixed my cousin. What a fist! He has marked him as with the stamp of the draper's guild." He laughed so much that finally we laughed too, and father said: "Yes, he is a solid fellow, our Nicolas. This one is perhaps bigger, he has larger bones, but Nicolas has muscle."

We laughed a good deal, but were all the sadder for it

afterwards. When Master Jean left the city, the same day, we went to see Nicolas in jail. He was sitting on a bundle of straw, and as father was weeping, he said:

"What will you? It is a misfortune, and you will have nothing. I know it. But when one can't change anything, it is as well to say, 'at God's mercy.' " We could see that it grieved him greatly. When we were about to go we kissed one another, and he asked to see his brothers and sisters, but mother would not allow it.

Three days later Nicolas set out to join his regiment, the Royal-Allemand. He was sitting in a wagon with five or six other comrades who also had been fighting, drinking, and spending their premium money. Dragoons of the gendarmerie on horseback rode on either side, and I ran on behind crying, "Good by, Nicolas, good by."

He lifted his hat. His eyes were full of tears at the thought of leaving the country, of not seeing father or mother, with no one but me near him. So goes the world. Father was working as on every day, to live, and mother was angry with him. Later, she often said, "Our poor Nicolas! I should have forgiven him right away. He was such a good boy." Certainly, but that did not help matters now. He was in the regiment of the Royal-Allemand, in garrison in Valenciennes, in Flanders, and we were to remain very long without hearing from him.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DEFICIT CONTINUES TO GROW

This foolishness of Nicolas would have kept us in misery for years if Master Jean had not taken pity on us; but the evening when my brother left, this good man, seeing me disconsolate in my corner behind the stove, said:

“Don’t feel so bad, Michel. I know that that money-grabber Robin has you in his clutches; your parents never can pay what they owe him, they are too poor. But you will pay him. Your apprenticeship is now finished, and you will receive five francs a month. You are a good worker, and I am pleased with your conduct.”

He spoke with emphasis. Dame Catharine and Nicole had their eyes full of tears, and I replied at once, “Oh, Master Jean, you treat us as though you were our father.”

Chauvel, who was about to enter with Marguerite, cried, “Yes, that is good. I have always liked you, Master Jean, but now I esteem you.” He reached out his hand and touched my shoulder.

“Michel,” he said to me, “your father has charged me to find a place for your Lisbeth. Well, there is one waiting for her in the beer-shop of the Green Tree, with Toussaint at Vasselonne. She will have lodging, and board, her shoes, and two louis a year. Later on, if the girl conducts herself well, we shall see. This is all that is necessary for her to commence.”

The joy of my parents can be imagined, when they heard this good news. Lisbeth could not contain herself for happiness. She wanted to leave on the very minute, but it was necessary to take up a collection in the village, because she had nothing but the old clothes of every day. Chauvel gave her sabots, Nicole a skirt, Dame Catharine two shirts almost new, Létumier's daughter a jacket, and her father and mother their best counsel and their benediction.

Then she embraced us quickly and took the path for Saverne, which led across the gardens, stretching her long limbs, her little bundle under her arm, quite proud and confident. We looked after her from our door, but she did not turn her head. Once over the hill she was' lost to us forever. The old folks wept.

Such is the history of poor folk; they bring up little ones, and when the feathers are grown, all leave the nest, one after another, to pick up a living. The old ones remain to dream.

But, at any rate, from that moment the debt began to grow less. At the end of every month, when I had received my five francs, we went together, my father and I, to Monsieur Robin, in Mittelbronn. We would go into that nest of rats full of gold and silver, and the old rascal was there with his big watch-dog, in his little low room, sitting behind the little windows strongly barred with iron, his greasy beaver bonnet on his head, his elbows among his ledgers, busy balancing his accounts.

"Hey," he would say, immediately, "that you again? Goodness, what hurries you? I am not asking you for a penny. On the contrary, do you want more? Do you want ten or fifteen francs? You have only to say so."

"No, Monsieur Robin," I would say to him. "Here is the interest on the note, and here is four francs and ten sous to go on the principal. Please mark it, four francs ten sous less on the back of the note."

Then, seeing that I had some good sense, and that we were tired of being plucked, he wrote while saying in a drawling voice, "Hey, so, so! Render people a service." And I, bending over his arm-chair, would watch that he wrote exactly, so much for interest, so much off the principal. I had seen enough of what it cost to be in the clutches of a fox like this. So I kept my eyes open.

As we went out, my father, who always remained near the door, having nothing to do since he could not read, would say to me, "Michel, you are the saving of us. You are the strength of the family." And when we returned to the hut he would cry out to my brothers and sisters, "Here is our master, the one who is helping us out of trouble. He knows something, while we know nothing. . . . It is he to whom we should always listen. Without him we would be but poor creatures abandoned by heaven."

It was unfortunately but too true. What can poor wretched people do who do not even know how to read? What can they do in the clutches of such a fellow as Robin? They must submit to be eaten up alive.

It took us more than a year to pay the nine gros and to get back the note. At last Monsieur Robin said that we were giving him too much trouble, and that we were paying him in too small sums. I answered him it was well. We could give the money to the prevost, and he immediately softened.

Finally, when I brought back the note, mother jumped

up for joy. She wished she could have read it and cried, "It is ended. It is ended. You are sure it is ended, Michel?"

"Yes, I am sure."

"We will no longer have any *corvées* to fulfil for Monsieur Robin?"

"No, mother."

"Let us see. Read a bit."

Everybody bent over me with mouth open listening. And when at the end I read, "Paid," one would have thought they were savages rejoicing. Mother cried, "The goat will no longer eat the grass on our backs. It is none too soon. Hasn't it made us work off many a *corvée*?"

Shortly after that Monsieur Robin, having stopped at the hut to ask us if we needed any money, mother picked up the pitchfork and ran after him like a mad woman yelling, "Here you come again to bring us more *corvées* to do. Wait!"

She would have annihilated him if he had not taken to his heels in spite of his big stomach, and run to the end of the village. It is terrible, but can you wonder that honest people when they are pushed to the wall, go to such extremes? The usurers always come to a bad end. They ought to remember that the people sometimes fall very low, but that they soon rise again, and that then their turn comes to settle accounts. I have seen that five or six times in my life. The country did not have gendarmes to defend these thieves. Let them remember it. It is a good piece of advice I am giving them. I am writing a history first for the peasants, but it can also serve others. The laborer, the wagoner, the miller, the baker, the one

who makes the bread, and the one who eats it, all profit by the good seed, and the one who sows it is content to know that everybody finds in it something for himself.

While these things were occurring the rest of things were going on in the ordinary way. The fairs, the markets succeeded one another, the imposts were paid, the people remonstrated, the Capuchins took up their collections, soldiers went to drill, and even the punishment by hitting them with the flat of the saber was reestablished. Every Friday I would go to the city to buy our salt and I would witness this abomination, old soldiers beaten by miserable cadets. It was a long time ago, and yet I tremble at the very thought of it.

What also used to fill us with indignation was that the foreign regiments on our pay-roll, like the Swiss of Schoenau, and all the others, were commanded in German. Wasn't that absurd? When they were to fight together against the same enemies, to have two kinds of commands? I remember that an old soldier of our village, Martin Gros, often complained of this piece of stupidity, and said that they had done us a great wrong during the war with Prussia. But our old kings and seigniors did not like to see the people and the soldiers on too good terms. They had to have Swiss, Chamborans, regiments of Saxony, Royal-Allemands, and so on, to take care of the French. They had no confidence in us, and treated us like prisoners whom one surrounds with trusted hirelings.

Then, later, we shall see how these foreigners acted against France which had nurtured them; we shall see their regiments passing over en masse to the enemy. But I must continue.

In the evening we read the newspapers, sometimes by


ourselves, sometimes with Chauvel. Master Jean was not mistaken on the score of the seigniors, the princes, and the bishops since Monsieur Necker had been dismissed, these people ceased to trouble themselves about the deficit. The journals contained only accounts of feasts, of festivals, pensions, and indulgences. Our beautiful queen, Marie Antoinette, and Monsieur the Count d'Artois, and messieurs the grand squires, the grand masters of the hounds, and the grand masters of the wardrobe, the first gentleman of the chamber, the caterers, the cupbearers, the carving squires, this whole pack of noble servitors, who live from hand to mouth, as it were, and snap their fingers in the face of bankruptcy—they had soon found ministers to suit their fancy and to continue their jollification; men like Joly de Fleury, and others, who rendered no accounts.

When Master Jean read of these fêtes and jollifications, he was no longer indignant, but his fat face fell, and he coughed behind his hand, saying:

“What is this chamber of the king?—the music chapel, the chapel of oratory, the chamberlain, the gentleman of the household, the great stable, the little stable, the hunting train, and the wolf hunting train, the private purse, the captaincy of the hunts of Fontainebleau, of Vincennes, of Royal-Monceau, special courts of justice for the park of Boulogne, of Muette, and its dependencies, the bailiffs and captains royal, the hunting train of the Louvre, and the falconries of France—what is all this, and what do we care about it?”

Chauvel would then answer, smilingly, “That makes business go, Master Jean.”

“Business!”





“Without doubt true business means when money goes out, but never comes back to the peasant: It is luxury that makes business. Our ministers have told us this hundreds of times. We must end by believing it. We here work and pay always, but there the noble people amuse themselves and spend. They wear laces, embroideries, and diamonds; they have twelve valets of the chambers and of the antechambers, upholsterers, hair-dressers, keepers of the bath, laundresses, ladies in waiting, equerries—all this makes business go. All this does not live on lentils and beans. All this does not wear the gray linen blouse like ourselves.”

“No, no, I believe you, Chauvel,” answered my godfather, indignantly. “Nor the overseers of the royal kitchen neither, nor the inspectors of the department of the mouth, nor the dentists. Oh, misfortune, misfortune, that so many millions must work to keep this sort of folk! Better read something else.”

But, in turning the page, he found other things and worse—buildings, invitations of all sorts, presentations, promenades with gold-laced hats and silk dresses; in short, ceremonies of which we poor peasants could hardly imagine the amount of money that they cost. Chauvel cried out in astonishment, “But what was Monsieur Necker telling us? We never had so much money. We have so much we don’t know what to do with it.” At the same time he looked at us with his eyes full of mischief. And wrath entered our souls. For, without being too close, one could say that in a time when three-quarters and more of France suffered cold and hunger, such expenditures to feed the vanity of a few rascally scamps was a horrible thing.


Before going out Chauvel would always say, "Well, well, all goes well. The imposts, the expenditures, the deficit, increase from year to year. We are prospering. The more we get in debt the richer we are—it is clear."

"Yes, yes," said Master Jean, going with him to the door, "it is very clear." He closed the door, and I returned within.

The more we read the journals, the more our anger increased. We saw that the nobles took us for fools. But what could we do? The militia, the gendarmerie, and the army were with them. One cried out to himself, "Are they happy, these seigniors, to be alive; and we are miserable wretches!"

The example of the queen, of the Count d'Artois, and the rest who made much of themselves at the court, extended to the small villages. There were fêtes upon fêtes, grand reviews, processions, jollifications, and so on. The prevosts, the majors, the colonels, the captains, the lieutenants, and the cadets strutted and belabored their soldiers and even the peasants as they returned to the villages in the evening. Ask old Laurent Duchemin. He will tell you what sort of a life is led by the young officers of the Castella regiment at Panier-Fleuri; how they drink champagne, and make the women and girls enter to dance, as they say; and how, when the parents or husbands object, they beat these poor people with canes even as far as Quatre-Vents.

One must also understand the sadness which oppressed us poor peasants and workmen when we heard the music and saw those daughters of the bourgeois, of the aldermen, of the syndics, of the sworn commissaries, of the game inspectors, wine-tasters, commissaries of sales, in a



word, all that we knew of the fashionable set—to see the young ladies promenading on the arms of these youths, and walking with them at the Tivoli. This sight always made us sick at heart. The girls thought that possibly it would ennoble them.

No longer did any one find hopes in the deficit. Every one who had any sense could see that it must increase, especially since the queen and the Count d'Artois had brought about the nomination of M. de Calonne to be controller general of finance. For he also can boast of having worried us for four years, with his loans, and transfers of debt, as he called them, the prorogation of the "twentieths" with his additional cents, and his other sharp tricks. We have seen many bad ministers since Calonne, but none worse, for his inventions and falsehoods to dupe people have passed from one to the other, and even the most stupid of them could use these and appear smart. He had a way of making you see everything in a beautiful light, just like other knaves who never intend to pay their debts, only to increase them. Their air of confidence lends it to others, and that is all they are looking for.

But Calonne did not deceive us any, nevertheless. Master Jean could never open a journal without getting angry and saying:

"This rascal will end by giving me a stroke of apoplexy. He lies continually. He throws our money out of the windows. He takes from St. Peter to give to St. Paul. He borrows from right and left, and when the time comes to pay, he will run away to England and leave us in the lurch. I predict it to you; it cannot turn out otherwise."

Everybody saw those things except the king, the queen, the princes, the princes whose debts Calonne had paid, and the courtiers upon whom pensions and favors had rained.

The clergy were not so stupid. They were beginning to see that all these beautiful tricks of Calonne would have a bad ending. Every time that Chauvel returned from his tours his face was brighter, his eyes shone. He smiled as he seated himself with little Marguerite behind the stove.

"Master Jean, everything is going better and better. ✓ Our poor parish priests read nothing but the 'Savoyard Vicar' of Jean Jacques, the canons and beneficiaries of all sorts read Voltaire. They are beginning to preach the love of one's neighbor. They are troubled over the misery of the people. They make collections for the poor. In all Alsace and Lorraine one hears of nothing but good works. At such a monastery the superior is reclaiming swamps to furnish work for the peasants. At another they have remitted the small tithe for the year. At another they are distributing soup. Better late than never. All these good ideas came to them at once. Oh, these folks are smart, very smart. They feel that the ship is sinking slowly, and they want to have friends who will hold out a pole to them." And his little eyes winked.

We could hardly believe what he told us. It seemed to us too strange, but during the years 1784, 1785, and 1786, Chauvel became more and more gay and smiling. He was like one of those birds who soar very high because of their keen sight, and who see things very far off and very clearly above the clouds.

Little Marguerite was becoming very pretty. Often

when passing the forge she would look in at the door with her bundle of books on her shoulder, crying to us in her clear, gay voice, "Good morning, Master Jean, good morning, Monsieur Valentine, good morning, Michel!" And every time I would go out, for it gave me great pleasure to laugh with her. She was very dark, very much sunburned, and the edge of her little blue linen skirt and her little shoes with thick leather laces were covered with mud. But she had such bright eyes, such pretty teeth, and such beautiful black hair. She looked so gay and so courageous that, without knowing why, I was delighted to have seen her, and I watched her walking up the path to their house thinking, "If I could only carry her basket and sell books with them it would be great pleasure for me." But I did not go farther, and when Master Jean would shout, "Hey, Michel, what are you doing there," immediately I would run and answer, "Here I am, Master Jean."

I had become assistant blacksmith. I earned my ten francs a month, and mother was very much relieved. Lisbeth sent compliments from Vasselonne only from time to time. The servants in the beer-shops need fine clothes, and she was proud. Anyway she did not send anything. But my brother Claude, who was herder at the monastery of the Tiercelins, received four francs a month, and he sent three of them to his parents. Étienne and Mathurine braided little baskets, made cages, and sold them in the city. I loved these two, and they loved me well also, especially Étienne. He came to meet me every night, swinging himself and laughing with pleasure. He would take my hand and say, "Come and see, Michel, my work of to-day." Sometimes it was very well made,


and father would say, to encourage him, "I have never braided so well."

The idea of sending Étienne to be with the curé, Monsieur Christopher, had occurred to me more than once, but, unfortunately, he could not go back and forth morning and evening, as it was too far. But, as he had the desire to learn, I gave him lessons when I returned from the forge, and that way he learned to read and write. In a word, no one in our household begged from any one, we all lived by our labor, and our parents had a chance to breathe.

Every Sunday after vespers I made my father take a seat in the inn of the Three Pigeons and drink his pint of white wine. That did him good. Mother, who had only wished to possess one good goat, could now lead it along the road and let it browse on the grass. I had bought her one from the old Jew Schmoûle, a fine goat whose udder reached quite to the ground. Mother's greatest happiness was in taking care of this goat, milking it, and making cheese. She loved this goat like the very eyes of her head. The parents asked for nothing more, and as for myself I was very happy.

After work was over on Sundays and fête days we had time to read. Master Jean lent me some good books, and I passed such afternoons entirely in study, instead of playing skittles with my companions.

We were then in the year 1785, and that was the time of a great scandal in France, the time when the unfortunate Cardinal de Rohan, whom the Curé Christopher looked down upon, wished to seduce the young Queen Marie Antoinette, having given her a necklace of pearls. This man had really lost his head, for he let himself be



deceived by an actress. She ran away with the pearls, but was arrested afterwards and branded on the shoulder with the fleur-de-lis. As for the cardinal, they could not brand him because he was a prince, but he got permission to go off to Strasburg.

These things come back to me from the far-off past, and I remember that Master Jean had said to me that, if by any misfortune Father Benedic or any other Capuchin should try to seduce his wife, he would not fail to break the rascal's head with his sledge hammer. I would have done the same thing, but our king was too good, and it was a great shame for the queen that a cardinal could even hope to lead her astray with presents. All the country was talking of it. The respect for the seigniors, the princes, and the bishops was lost and the contempt of honest folks for them grew more and more. The deficit also was not forgotten. This could not be paid by the falsehoods of Monsieur de Calonne and the scandals of the court.

And so we came along to the end of 1786. At the beginning of the new year Chauvel and his daughter arrived covered with snow. They were coming back from Lorraine, and on their way told us they had learned that the king was summoning the nobles to Versailles to hear the accounts of Calonne and try to pay off the debt.

Master Jean was full of joy, and cried out, "We are saved! Our good king has taken pity on his poor people; he desires equality of taxation!" But Chauvel, his pack still on his back, became quite pale with anger when he heard him, and answered:

"If our good king calls the notables together, it is because he cannot do otherwise. The debt is now sixteen hundred and thirty millions. How can you be so simple

as to believe that the princes of the blood, the chiefs of the nobility, of the magistrates, and of the clergy, will pay this out of their own pockets! No, they will try to put it on our backs! And this good queen and this brave Count d'Artois, after leading astray the beautiful life of which you know, after having made fools of the people, and committing all sorts of scandals and follies, these honest folk have not the courage to bear the responsibility of their own deeds. They summon the notables together to sign and seal documents. But we, we, we unfortunates, who are always paying and never profiting, we are not called together. No one asks our opinion. It is dishonesty; it is baseness!"

Chauvel became furious while he was speaking. It was the first time I had seen him angry. He raised his hand and trembled on his little legs. Marguerite, all damp, her black hair clinging to her cheeks by the melting snow, stood near to support him. Master Jean wanted to reply, but they would not hear him. Dame Catharine sat by her spinning-wheel quite indignant, crying that our good king did what he could, that he must not lack in respect for the queen in this inn, that it would not be permitted, and Valentine said, "You are right, Dame Catharine. We must respect the representatives of God on earth! That is so, you are a thousand times right!"

He stretched out his long arms with an air of admiration. Then Chauvel and Marguerite left abruptly, and did not come back to our house again. They turned their heads as they passed the forge, which made us feel very bad. Master Jean said to Valentine:

"There! Who asked you to meddle in my affairs?



Because of you my best friend no longer comes to see me, a man I respect, who has more sense and wit in his little finger than you have in all your great body. Things have adjusted themselves, and I end up by understanding that he is right."

"And I," responded Valentine, "I maintain that he was wrong. The nobility desire the happiness of the people."

Master Jean, however, became quite red, and looked over at him, muttering, "Donkey! if you were not such a good man I would have sent you to grass a long time ago." But he only said these things under his breath, for Valentine would not allow himself to be insulted, not even by Master Jean. He had a great deal of pride despite his stupidity, and I am sure he would have done up his bundle and left the very same day. In this way, instead of losing one friend, we would have lost two. We had to take care of that.

Our sorrow and sadness at no longer seeing Chauvel increased from day to day. This lasted until one morning Master Jean, seeing the peddler and his little girl hurrying past the forge, ran outside and cried, with emotion:

"Chauvel, Chauvel! you are not angry with me? I am not angry with you."

Then they shook hands, and one could see that they could have kissed each other. A few days afterwards Chauvel and Marguerite, having returned from one of their journeys in Alsace, came to sit again behind the stove. The question was never brought up after that.

It was at the time that the notables were gathered at Versailles, and one began to see that Chauvel was right

when he said that they would do nothing for the people. For these nobles had begun to deliberate upon the discourses of Calonne, who declared himself "that the debt could no longer be paid by ordinary means, that the general farms would have to be abolished, and provincial assemblies established to tax every one according to his means, and put an impost on all estates without distinction." They ended by refusing everything.

Chauvel listened to this and laughed in his beard. "Ah, the bad lot," cried Master Jean. But Chauvel only said, "What will you? Those people love one another. They are not bad-hearted enough to tax themselves or do themselves any harm. . . . Oh, if they had been established to put a new impost upon the people, that would not have taken long. They would have said "Yes," already, probably ten times rather than once. But to have to tax one's own lands, that is hard. I understand that. . . . When one has respect for himself he takes care of himself."

What caused Chauvel to rejoice the most was the formula with which the account of the assembling of the nobles was always begun: "After the speech of the king, monsignor the keeper of the seals approached the throne, making three profound obeisances, the first after having left his place, the second after having taken a few steps, and the third at the first step of the throne. Then, on his knees, he received the orders of his master."

"This is the most beautiful part of all," he would say; "by that we are saved."

At last the king sent away Calonne and named Monsignor de Brienne, archbishop in his place. The nobles then accepted the reforms, one has never found out why.

But immediately those of the Parliament of Paris who had never borne any of the expenses of the court (because they were judges), these grave economical people who lived apart by themselves, became indignant when they learned that they were expected to pay for the follies of others. They therefore opposed the imposts on land and declared that the States General would have to be called to consent to the imposts, which plainly meant that every one, workman, peasant, bourgeois, and noble, would have to vote together to give their money. Now the whole thing was out. It was a scandal greater than that of the queen and the Cardinal de Rohan. For the Parliament declared by that that from time immemorial, the people had been imposed upon without their consent being asked, and that it was a veritable theft.

Thus the French Revolution began.

It was clear, then, that the nobles and the monks had deceived the mass of the nation for centuries past. The first judges of the country said so. The others had always lived at our expense. They had reduced us to the most abject misery to gorge themselves. Their nobility did not mean anything. They had no more rights than we. They had no more heart or brains than we had. Our ignorance was the foundation of their grandeur, and they had brought us up purposely in ideas contrary to good sense, to fleece us the easier.

Every one can now imagine the joy of Chauvel that Parliament had made this declaration. "Now things are going to change," he cried. "Great things are coming to pass. The end of the misery of the people is approaching and justice is beginning."

## CHAPTER VIII

### A LETTER FROM NICOLAS

The declaration of the Parliament of Paris came like a wind-storm to the provinces. Nothing but the States General was talked about in the villages, at the fairs, and in the markets. It was not possible for five or six peasants following the same road and talking of their own affairs to be a quarter of an hour without one of them crying out, "And the States General! When are we to have our States General?"

Then each would have his word to say as to the abolition of the tolls, the octroi duties, the "twentieths," as to the nobility, and the Third Estate. They would dispute to be heard on entering the first inn; the women also took their part. Instead of living like fools who always paid, paid, without knowing where their money went, each one wanted to have his accounts and himself to vote his taxes. We were getting good sense.

Unfortunately that year was a very bad one because of the great drouth. From the middle of June to the end of August, not one drop of rain fell, which was what the wheat, the oats, and all the harvest lacked. The hay was not worth the cutting. Already famine was in sight, for even the potatoes had not been given to the people as yet. It was real desolation. And then the winter of 1788 came, the most terrible winter of which the men of my age have any recollection.

✓ The news spread that the rascals had bought up all the wheat of France in order to starve us, and even called this the treaty of starvation. These robbers bought up all the grain and the harvests of all kinds and sent them by ship to England, and when the famine had come, they brought these vessels back, selling the grain as they pleased. Chauvel told us that this society of bandits had existed for a long time, and that King Louis XV himself had belonged to it. We did not wish to believe this, it seemed too horrible. But I can see from what followed that it was true.

The poor people of France had never suffered as much as in that winter of 1788-1789, not even at the worst time, nor later, even in 1817, the dear year. All over the inspectors came to the farms, they forced you to thresh the grain, and loaded it at once for the markets of the city.

If I had not had the good fortune to gain my twelve francs a month, and if Claude had not sent all he could, to provide for the poor old folks and the two children who remained in their charge, God only knows what would have become of them. Thousands died of hunger. After that, can one imagine the destitution of Paris, a city to which everything came from without, and which almost died from top to bottom, since there was no means of transporting the grain, the vegetables, and the meats to the markets!

But, despite all, the people had not forgotten the States General. On the contrary, the destitution increased their indignation. They reasoned: "If you had not spent our silver, we would not be so miserable. But have a care, have a care! This cannot last much longer. We want no more of Brienne than of Calonne. They are

your ministers. We want ministers of the people, like Necker and Turgot."

And during that terrible cold, when even wine and brandy froze in the cellars, Chauvel and his daughter never gave up for a moment their tours of the country with their packs. They had sheepskins on their limbs; and we trembled to see them leave, with their great iron staffs, across the snow and ice. They sold the little books which came from Paris without number, and sometimes on the return from their trips, they brought us several, from which we read as we sat behind our great stove, red and glowing as a coal. I have kept some of these little books, and if I could lend them to you, you would be astonished at the spirit and the good sense we had before the Revolution. Every one saw clearly, every one was tired of these rascalities, excepting the nobles and the soldiers they had bought.

One evening we would read "Diogenes at the States General," another evening "Complaints, Wailings, Remonstrances, and Vows" of our bourgeois of Paris, or "Causes of the Famine Made Plain," "Consideration of the Interests of the Third Estate Addressed to the People of the Provinces," and other such little books, which showed us that more than three-quarters of France thought as we did concerning the court, the ministers, and the bishops.

But at that time something happened which grieved me greatly, and which proves that even in families there are all sorts of people. During a heavy snow-storm about the middle of December, the old woman Hocard, who did errands for the city and village for a few farthings, came to tell us that Monsieur the Postmaster had called out

the unclaimed letters on the market-place, and that among them there was one for Jean-Pierre Bastien, of Baraques-du-Bois-de-Chênes. The letter-carrier, Brainstein, did not carry the letters from the village on the four roads leading out of the city. The postmaster's name was Monsieur Pernet. He came himself to the market-place carrying the letters in a basket. He walked among the benches, asking of the people, "Are you not from Lutzelbourg? Are you not from Hultenhausen, or Harberg?"

"Yes."

"Well, you will give this letter to Jean-Pierre, or Jean Claude [as the case might be], I have had it for five or six weeks. No one comes to call for it. It is time the letter reached its destination."

The letter would be taken and the postmaster troubled himself about it no longer. The old woman Hoccard would have taken ours, but it cost twenty-four cents, and the good woman did not have it, and besides, she was not sure that we would return it.

It was hard to spend twenty-four cents for a letter in those days. I had a good mind to leave it at the post, but mother and father, thinking that the letter was from Nicolas, were in great trouble. The poor old people told me that they would prefer to fast a fortnight than not have news of the boy. So I went to the city to get the letter. It was indeed from our brother Nicolas, and I came back to read it in our hut. The parents were greatly touched, and every one was astonished. It was written on the 1st of December, 1788. Brienne had been dismissed with a pension of eight hundred thousand francs; the States General were summoned for the 1st of May,

1789. Necker had been reinstated. But Nicolas did not bother himself with these things, and I copy this old yellow and torn piece of writing to show what the soldiers were thinking of, when all the rest of France was clamoring for justice.

This poor Nicolas was neither better nor worse than his comrades. He had no education, and he reasoned like a real fool for want of knowing how to read. But one could not reproach him, and perhaps the one whom he had asked to write for him added from time to time something of his own brewing, to show how smart he was. Anyway, here is the letter:

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—

To Jean-Pierre Bastien and Catharine, his wife, Nicolas Bastien, Brigadier in the 3d Squadron of the Regiment of the Royal-Allemand, in Garrison at Paris.

Dear Father and Mother, Brothers and Sisters:—

You must still be alive, for it would not be natural that all should die in four years and six months, when I am always well. I am not yet as fat as the syndic of the butchers, Kountz, of Phalsbourg; but, without flattering myself, I am quite as strong as he. My appetite is not lacking nor anything else, and that is the main thing. Dear father and mother, if you could see me on horseback with my hat cocked on my ear, my feet in the stirrups, and my sword at my side ready for a military salute, or when I am taking a pleasant walk in the city with a young acquaintance of mine on my arm, you would be astonished, and you could hardly believe that I was your son. If I wanted to pretend to be of the nobility, as a number of our regiment do, it would only depend on me. But you can well believe that I would be incapable of that, in consideration of your white hair and the respect I owe you.

You should also know that the first year the quartermaster, Jerome Leroux, persecuted me a great deal on account of the marks I had left on his face with that pitcher. But to-day I am brigadier of the 3d Squadron, and off duty I owe him nothing



but the salute. I will become quartermaster some day myself, and we will look up the old matter, for I am fencing master of the regiment, and in the very first year I wounded two prevosts of Noailles. And now, excepting Lafougère, Lauzan, and Bouquet, Mestre-General, not another would dare to look at me cross-eyed. It comes from the wrist or the eye. Either one has it or he has it not. It is a gift from the Lord. And even members of other regiments come and defy me through jealousy. On the 1st of July last, before leaving Valenciennes, the staff of the regiment put up a wager for me against the regiment of Conti, infantry. The master of arms, Bayard, a little dark Southerner, kept calling me the Alsatian, and I did not like it. I sent him two prevosts to demand satisfaction. It was all arranged in advance, and the following day we stood facing each other in the park. He jumped about like a cat; but at the third round I caught him neatly under the right breast. He did not even say "Pipe!" and it was all over. All the regiment rejoiced. I was given forty-eight hours in the guard-house, because I had an unhappy hand. But the major, the Chevalier Mendell, had a basket from his own table brought for Nicolas Bastien, a basket of fine wines and meat. Nicolas had won the wager for the Royal-Allemand. They could well afford to treat him. Since then I have the esteem of my superiors. And if you knew what is going on here, how this rabble of a bourgeoisie is beginning to bestir itself, principally the rustics; if you know that you will understand that there was no lack of opportunities to fight. No later than on the 27th of August the commander of the guard, Dubois, made us charge on the mob on the New Bridge, and all that day until midnight we did nothing but ride over their bellies, at the Place Dauphine, at the Place de Grève, and everywhere. If you could have seen the following day what a massacre we made in the Rue Saint-Dominique and the Rue Meslée, you would have said, "It goes well!" . . . I was the first to the right of the squadron in the second line. Everything that came within reach was battered to the ground. My lieutenant-colonel, Reinach, after the charge, said that the rustics would not care to pipe after this. I should think not, for they had gotten some hard knocks. This goes to show the beauty of discipline. When the order comes everything must go. If you

had father, mother, brother, or sister before you, you would ride over them as over manure. I would be quartermaster already if I could write, to make out the reports. But don't trouble yourselves. I have my little score to settle with Jerome Leroux! A young man of good family named Gilbert Gardet, of the 3d Squadron, is teaching me the letters while I give him lessons in counterpoint. It will go all right, I assure you. As soon as I can you will receive one in my own handwriting, and upon this, while embracing you and wishing you all that you may desire in this life and in the next, I make my mark.

+

NICOLAS BASTIEN,

Fencing Master of the Regiment of Royal-Allemand.

December 1, 1788.

Poor Nicolas knew nothing more beautiful than to fight. The noble officers considered him as a species of bull-dog that one pits against another dog, and that wins wagers for them. And he thought this magnificent. I forgave him from my heart, but I was ashamed to show his letter to Master Jean and Chauvel. Father and mother, however, during all the time I was reading, lifted their hands in admiration, mother especially laughing. She exclaimed, "Ah, I knew that Nicolas would make his way. Ah, you see how one advances! It is because we always remained in Baraques that we are so poor. But Nicolas will become noble. I predict it. He will become noble!"

Father was also pleased. He saw some danger in fighting, and he said, while looking at the ground, "Yes, yes, that's very fine. But I only hope no one will prick him under the right breast. . . . That would break our hearts. But that is terrible. The other one perhaps also had a father and mother."

"Ah, bah! ah, bah!" cried mother, and immediately she took the letter to show to the neighbors, saying, "A

letter from Nicolas. He is brigadier, master of fencing! He has already killed a lot of people. One must not look at him cross-eyed!" And so on.

Only two or three days later did she give me back the letter, and, as Master Jean had asked for it, I had to bring it to be read in the evening. Chauvel and Marguerite were there. I hardly dared to lift my eyes. Master Jean said, "What a misfortune to have numskulls in one's family! People who think of nothing but of chopping down mother, father, brothers, and sisters, and who think it beautiful because it is called discipline."

Chauvel answered, "Bah, it is good to know what Nicolas is telling us! We had not heard anything about those charges and massacres in the streets; we knew nothing of it. The papers had not told us anything about it. Though I had heard, during my tours, that from Grenoble, Bordeaux, and Toulouse, they have sent bodies of troops. Oh, this is a good sign! It proves that the current is drawing in everything, and that nothing can stop it. These fights have already caused the dismissal of Lomenie de Brienne and the convocation of the States General. What one really must fear is not the fights. What are fifty or even a hundred regiments when the mass of the people is against them! If the people will only will in earnest what it wills, provided the Third Estate is only in accord, the rest will be like foam that is blown away by a great wind. I am glad to hear all this. Let us prepare for the elections. Let us be ready. And let the good sense and justice of all become apparent."

Then Chauvel's lips were no longer compressed. He seemed full of confidence, and despite the famine, which was prolonged till the end of March, despite everything,

the peasants, the workmen, and the bourgeois held together. Chauvel was right, as to the declaration of the Parliament, when he said that the time of great things was approaching. Everybody felt stronger and firmer. It was like a new life. The very poorest, without coat or bread, instead of bending over as before, had the air of lifting his head and looking at the sky.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHAUVEL HAS A NARROW ESCAPE

The more the famine increased the more the poor people showed courage; those of Baraques, of Hultenhausen, of Quatre-Vents, were nothing but skin and bone; they dug out roots from under the snow and boiled old nettles which grew among ruins. They strove to find any and every means of sustenance. The destitution was terrible. But the spring was coming, though ever so slowly.

The Capuchins of Phalsbourg no longer dared to beg. They would have been felled on the roads, because the regiment of La Fère which replaced that of Castella, would not support them. They were old soldiers tired of the young nobility and of being beaten by the flat of the saber.

Besides, something ran in the air. The bailiffs and the seneschals had been forced to publish the edict of the king for the convocation of the States General. One knew that the bailiffs and the seneschals would receive the last convocation letters for a certain date, and that immediately they would announce this to their hearers; that they would cause them to be placarded on the walls of the city hall, and that the curés would read them before their sermons, and that within a week after these things were made public, all of us, workmen, bourgeois, peasant, we would all assemble at the city hall, to draw up a memorial of our grievances and complaints, and to

elect deputies who would carry this memorial to a place to be indicated later. This is all that we knew in general. Thank goodness, we had enough complaints to put in the memorial of each parish!

We also knew that a second assemblage of notables was gathered at Versailles, to decide upon the last measure to be taken before the States General. In those days of famine, in December, 1788, in January and February, 1789, people talked of nothing but the Third Estate. Every one learned then that the Third Estate meant the bourgeois, the merchants, the peasants, the workmen, and the poor; that our poor ancestors had been consulted in such States General, but that they had to present the memorial of complaints on their knees with a rope around their necks, to the king, the nobles, and the bishops. This caused great indignation when we found out that the parliament wanted to receive our representatives in the same condition, which they called the adopted form of 1614.

And so every one called the members of parliament rascals, and one could see that, if they were the first to ask for the meeting of the States General, it was not to help the poor people and do them justice, but to avoid putting on their own lands the imposts that the poor people had been bearing for so long.

The newspapers said that wheat was coming from America and Russia, but in Baraques and all the mountain region, instead of giving us some, the inspectors searched the houses, even to the thatching, to rifle us of the little there might be left. The people of the great cities revolted, and they had to be managed carefully, but the peaceable people were despoiled because they were patient.

I remember that, toward the end of February, the time of the greatest famine, the mayor, the aldermen, and the syndics of the city, who were visiting the barns and sheds in the outlying districts, came to dine one day at the inn of Master Jean.

Chauvel, who when he came back from his tours always brought us the news of Alsace and Lorraine, just happened to be in the big dining-room. He had laid down his pack on the bench, and did not know what was coming. When he saw all these people coming in, with powdered wigs, three-cornered hats, square-cut coats, woolen stockings, with tippets and gloves trimmed with fur clear up to the elbows, and behind them the lieutenant of the prevost, Desjardins, tall, dry, yellow, his hat all gold lace, and a sword at his side, Chauvel was at first a little troubled. The lieutenant of the prevost looked at him over his shoulder out of the corner of his eye. It was he who used to put people to the torture. He had an ugly countenance. While the others were busy taking off their things, and ran to see what was going on in the kitchen, he unbuckled his sword and stood it up in a corner. Then he went quietly to the pack, uncovered it, and looked at the books.

Chauvel stood a little behind, his hands in the pockets of his trousers, under his smock frock, as though nothing were happening.

"Hey," cried the aldermen and the syndics, coming and going, "this is another corvée to impose." They were laughing.

The door of the kitchen stood open, the fire was bright on the hearth, and its light penetrated quite into the big dining-room. The little syndic of the bakers, Merle, was

lifting the covers from the pots and asking explanations from Dame Catharine. Nicole was spreading out a fine white table-cloth on the table. But the lieutenant of police did not stir from his place. He continued pulling out the books, one after another, from the pack, and piling them upon the bench.

"It is you who sell these books?" he said at last, without even turning around.

"Yes, sir," answered Chauvel, quietly, "at your service."

"Do you know," drawled out the other through his nose, "that this leads to the gibbet, this sort of work?"

"Oh, to the gibbet," said Chauvel, "such good little books? Why, see 'Deliberations at the Assemblies of the Bailiffs,' by Monsieur the Duke of Orleans; 'Reflections of a Patriot upon the General Position of the States General'; 'Grievances and Propositions, Renters of Coaches' with 'Prayer to the Public to Insert Them in their Memorials,' that is not very dangerous."

"And the privilege of the king?" asked the lieutenant, dryly

"The privilege? You well know, Monsieur, that since the time of Monsieur Lomenie de Brienne, the pamphlets pass without privilege."

The lieutenant continued to search and the others made a circle around them. Master Jean and I farther away, near the wardrobe, were not at our ease. Chauvel looked at us sidewise, as if to reassure us. He certainly had something hidden in his pack and the lieutenant's nose was very sharp. Fortunately, as the books were nearly all on the bench, Dame Catharine came in proudly with the smoking soup-tureen, and the little syndic Merle,



with his wig all disheveled, followed her, crying, "To the table! to the table! Here is the cream soup. Good heavens! What are you looking at now? Hey, I was sure of it! Another search party! Haven't we had enough of search parties as it is? Come along! Let us sit down or I shall begin alone!"

He had already seated himself, his napkin under his chin, and was uncovering the tureen, from which a delicious odor spread over the whole room. At the same time Nicole was bringing in a corned sirloin, at the sight of which all the officials hastened to sit down. The lieutenant, seeing that his companions were beginning without him, said to Chauvel, with some ill humor, "You know, an interrupted game is not a lost game," and he threw the book he held down upon the others, and sat himself down beside Merle.

Immediately Chauvel repacked all his pamphlets and went out with his pack upon his shoulder, throwing us a joyous look. We breathed again, for despite the promises that were made, we could not hear a lieutenant of the prevost speak of the rope without losing breath.

Any way, Chauvel got out safely, and the gentlemen dined as only the nobles and the rich dined before the Revolution. They had had their own wines brought from the city, fresh meat, and white bread.

At the door a dozen beggars were beseeching together and looking in at the window and asking for alms. Some did this so plaintively that it made you shudder, especially the women with their emaciated children in their arms. But these gentlemen of the city were not listening. They were laughing, uncorking bottles, and pouring out drink as they told their stories. They left at

three o'clock for the city, some in carriages, others on horseback to continue their search through the mountains.

That same evening Chauvel came to see us with Marguerite. He had hardly appeared on the doorstep when Master Jean called out:

"What a fright you have given us! What a terrible existence you are leading, Chauvel! This isn't living. To be always under the shadow of the gibbet, at the edge of the ladder—I wouldn't last a fortnight under such conditions."

"Neither would I," said Dame Catharine. We all thought the same, but he only smiled.

"Bah, all this is nothing," said he, sitting down. "All this now is only fun. Ten or fifteen years ago, yes, then I was pursued. Then you could not let yourself be caught with editions of Kehl or Amsterdam. Then I would have made only one jump from Baraques to the gallows, and a few years before, would have been hanged high and dry. Oh, yes, it was dangerous. But should I be arrested to-day, it would not be for long. And my arms and legs would not be broken to make me denounce my accomplices."

"All the same," said Master Jean, "you were not at your ease, Chauvel. You had something hidden in your pack."

"Without doubt. This is what I had," he answered, throwing a bundle of papers on the table. "Now see what is going on. Read!"

Then, with the doors and shutters closed, we read until nearly midnight, and I believe it will please you to have me copy some of the articles in those old newspapers. It

is touching to see how those people of great heart stood by one another.

Everywhere the nobility and the provincial parliaments were in accord in their opposition to the States General. In Franche-Comté, the people of Besançon had driven out their parliament because it opposed the edict of the king, and declared that the lands of the nobles were naturally exempt from taxation; that this had lasted for thousands of years, and should continue to last.

In Provence the majority of the parliament and the nobility had protested against the edict of the king for the convocation of the same States General. Then, for the first time, we heard the name of Mirabeau, a nobleman whom the others did not want, and who sided with the Third Estate. He said that these protests coming from the nobility and the parliament "were neither useful, decent, nor legitimate." One has never seen a man speak with so much force, justice, and grandeur. The others did not think him noble enough. They did not admit him to their deliberations—which showed their good sense.

Everywhere there was fighting. At Rennes, in Brittany, the nobility was killing the bourgeois who supported the edict, and principally the young men known for possessing courage. These bourgeois were not very strong, and called to their aid others from the cities of the province. And this is how the youth of Nantes and Angiers responded, coming by forced marches, "shuddering with horror at the news of the assassination committed at Rennes, called together by the general cry for vengeance and indignation, and realizing that the beneficent disposition of our august king, to set free the faithful subjects of the Third Estate from bondage, finds obstacles only in the

noble egotists who see in the destitution and the tears of the poor only an odious tribute that they would wish to extend to future generations; with an appreciation of our own strength and a desire to break the last link that binds us, have decided to come in sufficient numbers to make an impression upon the vile tools of the aristocrats. Let us protest in advance against those who may declare us seditious. Our intentions being pure, let us swear upon our honor and in the name of our country that in case an unjust tribunal should apprehend us, let us swear to do all that nature and courage and despair can inspire in a man for his own preservation!

“Given at Nantes, in the Hotel of the Stock Exchange, Jan. 28, 1789.”

Those were young tradesmen who spoke like that.

At Angiers young students were also marching, and this is what the women of this great country said:

Resolved, That the mothers, sisters, wives, and sweethearts of the young citizens of the town of Angiers, in special meeting assembled, having read the resolutions passed by the young men, declare that if the troubles should begin over again, and in case all the citizens united in a common cause should depart, we will join ourselves to the nation whose interests are ours, since strength is not our portion, reserving to ourselves another kind of usefulness in taking care of the stores, the provisions, and the packing for those who go forward, and all the care and consolation and service which may devolve upon us. We protest that our intention is not to fail in respect or obedience which we owe to the king, but that we will perish rather than abandon our sons, our husbands, or lovers, preferring the glory of sharing their dangers to the security of a shameful inactivity!

While reading this we were weeping and saying, “Here are brave women, honest people. We would also do like

them." We felt strong, and Chauvel, lifting his finger, cried:

"Let the nobles, the bishops, and the parliaments try to understand this. It is a great sign when women themselves begin to ask for their rights, and when they support their husbands, sons, and lovers rather than try to dissuade them from going to battle. This has not often happened, but when it has happened the other side has lost in advance."

## CHAPTER X

### MASTER JEAN AND CHAUVEL ARE NOMINATED

Some days after the 20th of March, 1789, when the snow began to melt, the news spread around that great placards, with big black seals of three fleur-de-lis, had been posted on the doors of churches, monasteries, and town buildings to call all the people to the common hall of Phalsbourg.

It was true. The posters called the nobility, the clergy, and the Third Estate to the assemblies of the bailiffs, where the States General was to be organized. I cannot do better than copy one of those posters for you. You can then see for yourself the difference between the States General of those days and what goes on to-day.

Regulations of the king for the execution of the letters of convocation of January 24, 1789: The king in addressing to the various provinces, subject to him, the letters of convocation for the States General, has desired that all his subjects should be called to join in electing the deputies who are to form the solemn and grand assembly. His Majesty has desired that from the farthest limits of his kingdom, and the habitations the least known, every one should be assured that his petitions and requests should reach the throne. His Majesty has, therefore, recognized with a real satisfaction that by means of the graded assemblies organized throughout France, for the representation of the Third Estate, he would be in some communication with all the inhabitants of his kingdom, and that he would be brought into close relation with their needs and desires in a surer and quicker manner.

After that the posters spoke of the nobility and the clergy, of their convocation, of the number of deputies that the bishops, the abbots, the chapters, and pensioned ecclesiastical communities, regular and secular, of both sexes, and generally all the ecclesiastics possessing fiefs, would have at the assemblies of the bailiffs and later at the States General. Then they came back to the things that concerned us first, "the parishes and communities, bourgs, also cities, will assemble at the house of the commune before the judge or any other public official. At this assembly there will have a right to be present all the inhabitants composing the Third Estate, born French or naturalized, of twenty-five years of age, living and comprised within the district of the imposts, to assist in the drawing up of the memorials and the nomination of the deputies.

"Second, The deputies chosen will form, at the town hall under the presidency of the official of the municipality, the assembly of the Third Estate for the city. They will draw up the memorials of the complaints and grievances of said city, and will elect deputies to carry them to the principal bailies.

"Third, The number of the deputies who will be chosen by the parishes and communities in the country districts to carry the memorials will be two, if there are two hundred or more households, three if there are three hundred or more, and so on.

"Fourth, In the principal offices of seneschals, the deputies of Third Estate in a preliminary meeting will reduce the memorials into one, and will choose a quarter among themselves to carry the memorial to the general assembly of the bailies.

“Fifth, His Majesty ordains that in the said principal bailies the election of the deputies of the Third Estate for the States General shall take place immediately after the gathering of all the memorials of all the cities and communities which will have there been represented.”

One sees that instead of nominating, as we do to-day, deputies whom we do not know from Adam, who are sent to us from Paris with good recommendations, we nominated people of our own village, which was more sensible. These again picked out among themselves those who were more capable, more courageous, and better fitted to present our complaints to the king, the princes, the nobles, and the bishops. In this way we secured something worth while.

See what our deputies of '89 have done and what they are doing to-day. By that you will see which is the better way—to have peasants whom one knows or to have men whom one accepts because the prefect has recommended them. This is not to belittle our gentlemen. But even in the best of things there is a choice. It is clear that the deputies should represent the people who have nominated them, and not the government which they are chosen to watch. That stands to reason. Supposing that King Louis XVI, by means of his bailiffs, his seneschals, his prevosts, his governors of provinces, and his gendarmerie, had nominated the deputies of the Third Estate himself, what would have happened? These deputies would never have dared to contradict the king who had elected them. They would have found good everything that the government desired, and we would still be plunged in misery.

I cannot describe to you the satisfaction and enthusi-



asm of the people when they knew that the States General would be convened, for despite everything, one still had some doubts. Because of being so often deceived one hardly dared believe anything. But this time the matter could not be postponed.

The same day Master Jean and I, about five o'clock in the evening, were working at the forge, like the happiest of beings. Every moment, as my godfather put the iron in the fire, he would cry out, his big face shining with joy, "Well, Michel, we are going to have our States General."

"Yes, Master Jean," I answered; "we have bagged the game."

And the sledges began to strike without cessation. The joy of the heart gives one extraordinary strength.

Out of doors there was mud such as we had not heard of for a long time. The snow was melting, water ran, carrying manure with it and filling the cellars. The women came out every minute to sweep it away. One misfortune usually brings another. After having accomplished the corvées for the king, the seigniors, and the monastery, it never occurred to us that we might have paved the street of the village. One was only too glad to rest, and to live in dirt.

Suddenly five or six old inhabitants of Baraques, from the hills and valley and beyond the region of the oak forest, with their old gray smock frocks, and large pancake felt hats, Père Jacques Létumier, Nicolas Cochart, Claude Huré, Gauthier Courtois, in a word, all the notables of the country, stopped before the forge with a majestic air, and uncovered as though they were about to make ceremonious bows.

"Hallo, is that you, Létumier?" cried Master Jean. "And you, Huré? What the dickens are you doing there?" He was laughing, but the others were very grave, and the big Létumier, bending his back to get through the door, and speaking way down in his throat, after the manner of crockery peddlers, said, "Master Jean, with due respect, we have a communication to make to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, to you, concerning the elections."

"Ah, ha! Well, come in! Here you are, standing in the mud."

Then, one by one they all came in. The little square place could hardly hold us. They must have been dreaming about how to begin their speech, when Master Jean said to them:

"Well, what, what is it you want of me? Do not hesitate to say what you want. If it is possible . . . you know me."

"This is what it is," said the wood-cutter Cochart. "You know that the three Baraques vote together in the city?"

"Yes, and what of it?"

"Well, the three Baraques have two hundred households. So we have a right to two deputies."

"Without doubt; and what of it?"

"Well, you are the first, that goes without saying. Only we are bothered about the other."

"What, you wish to nominate me?" said Master Jean, secretly flattered.

"Yes, but the other!"

Master Jean seemed perfectly pleased and said:

"Here we are toasting ourselves before the fire. Let us go to the inn. There we will empty a good pitcher together. It will clear our ideas."

Naturally they accepted. I was going to remain at the forge, but Master Jean from the middle of the street cried to me, "Hey, Michel, come on. On a day like this everybody must come to an understanding." And we went in together into the large dining-room. Everybody sat around the large table and all along the windows. Master Jean had wine brought, goblets, a loaf, and some knives. We touched goblets, and as Dame Catharine looked on in surprise, not knowing what all this meant, and Létumier was already wiping his mouth preparatory to explaining the reason of the reunion, Master Jean cried:

"I agree. You flatter me. I accept because every one ought to sacrifice himself for his country. Only, I must warn you that if you do not name Chauvel at the same time I will refuse."

"Chauvel, the Calvinist?" cried Létumier, turning his head and opening his eyes widely. And the others, looking at one another aghast, cried, "The Calvinist—our deputy—he?"

"Listen," said Master Jean, "we are not going to the meeting to gather as in council, for the purpose of deliberating upon the mysteries of our holy religion, or the holy sacraments and the rest. We go there for our business, principally to rid ourselves of subsidies, of poll-taxes, of corvées, of land taxes, to get even with our seigniors if possible, and get out of the game safely. Well, I am a man of good sense—at least I think so. But that is not enough to win a big stake. I know how to read and

write, and I also know where the shoe pinches, and if it were only a question of braying like a donkey, I would fulfil my part as well as any one from Quatre-Vents, Mittelbronn, or elsewhere. But that is not all. Over there we are going to find smart fellows of all kinds, solicitors, bailiffs, and seneschals, people of education, who will overwhelm us with a thousand reasons drawn from the laws, customs, and usages of this or that; and if we did not know how to answer them clearly, they would put the halter on us forever. Do you understand?"

Létumier opened his eyes clear to his ears. "Yes, but Chauvel, Chauvel," he said.

"Let me finish," said Master Jean. "I am willing to be your deputy, and if some one from among us will speak effectively for us, I can back him and will. But to answer for myself. No, I have neither sufficient education nor knowledge. And I tell you that in all the country, no matter where, no one can speak for us and defend us like Chauvel. He knows everything—the laws, the customs, ordinances, everything. This little man, you see, knows all the books which he has carried for twenty-five years on his back. When on the road, you imagine that he walks looking to the right and left, at the fields, trees, hedges, bridges, and rivers. Well, no. His nose is buried in one of his pamphlets, or he ruminates over what he has read. This means that, unless you are fools, and want to continue to have corvées, poll-taxes, and imposts, it is he you will choose even before me. If Chauvel is there, I will support him firmly. But if he is not chosen, you may just as well not nominate me at all, for I refuse in advance." Master Jean spoke simply, while the others scratched their ears.

"But," said the wood-cutter Cochart, "will he be accepted?"

"The posters make no difference in the matters of religion," responded Master Jean. "Every one is called, provided he is French, is twenty-five years of age, and that his name is inscribed on the tax-rolls. Chauvel pays like the rest of us—probably more; and besides, last year, our good king, has he not restored the civil rights of the Lutherans, Calvinists, and even the Jews? You ought to know this. Let us nominate Chauvel, and don't let us bother about the rest. I warrant you that he will bring us more honor than fifty Capuchins; that he will defend our interests with great good sense and great courage. He will be the pride of the three Baraques, believe me. Here, Catharine, another pitcher!"

The others were still in doubt, but when Master Jean had filled the glasses and said, "This is my last word: If you do not nominate Chauvel I refuse, but if you nominate him I accept. Here is to the health of our good king!" all seemed mellowed and repeated, "Here's to the health of our good king!" And when they had drank it, Létunier said, gravely, "It will be hard to make the women swallow it, but since it is that way, Master Leroux, here is my hand"; and, "Here is mine," said another, leaning over, and so on all around the table. After which they emptied the pitcher, and each one rose to return home. Those were the notables, and we the rest would do as they did.

"The thing is settled, then!" shouted Master Jean, standing on his doorstep.

"It is settled," they answered, as they went splashing through the mud.

Then we returned to the forge. All this made us thoughtful. We worked until seven, when Nicole came to call us to supper.

The gathering was to take place the following Sunday. Chauvel and his little girl had been on the road for the last two weeks. Never had they sold so many of their little books. Master Jean, however, hoped to find them at the great reunion at the city hall.

That evening nothing new occurred. The day had been full enough.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ELECTIONS

The following Sunday, between six and seven o'clock in the morning, as I was coming down the old street of Baraques with my father, the sun was rising red above the forest of La Bonne-Fontaine. It was the first fine day of the year. The thatched roofs and the little chimneys of black brick, from which the smoke arose and spread in the air, were bathed in gold. Little pools of water along the roadside shone as far as the eye could see. White clouds dotted the sky, and far, far away one heard the clarionets of the villages, which were starting for the meeting-place. The drums were beating the rappel in the city, and the first tinklings of the bell were calling to the mass of the Holy Ghost before the elections.

My father, already old and sunburned and broken down, his beard gray, and his neck bare, walked beside me with his smock frock of *écru* crash bound at the hips, trousers also of linen fastened at the ankles with strings, and shoes of yellow leather without heels, laced in the shape of boots. He wore upon his head, like all the peasants of our time, the old woolen bonnet that has since been placed upon the flag of the republic. He looked thoughtfully to the right and to the left out of the corner of his eyes, as though some one were going to fall upon us. It is when one has suffered much that he mistrusts everything. Every second the poor man would say to

me, "Michel, take care! Don't let us speak. Keep quiet! This will end badly."

I had more confidence. The habit of hearing Master Jean and Chauvel talk of the affairs of the country and of reading myself of what was going on in Rennes, Marseilles, and Paris lent me some courage, and at the age of eighteen the work at the forge had broadened my shoulders. The twelve-pound hammer did not weigh very much in my calloused hand. I had hardly a hair on my chin, but that did not prevent me from looking any man full in the face, were he soldier, bourgeois, or peasant. I also liked to be well dressed on Sundays. I wore breeches of dark blue cloth, top boots, and velvet waistcoat, after the fashion of blacksmiths. And I must say, I looked at the pretty girls with pleasure. I thought them beautiful. That is not forbidden. And there you have it!

All the village was on foot. As we came to the inn Master Jean and Valentine were in the large dining-room, whose windows were thrown open, emptying together a bottle of wine and breaking a crust before starting. They were both in full dress, Master Jean, with his master blacksmith's coat, with large tails, his red vest, and knee breeches buckled on his fat legs, and large silver buckles on his round-toed shoes; Valentine in a gray linen blouse, the collar and front of which was festooned with red pipings, a large silver heart clasping his shirt, and the peasant's bonnet inclining on his ear. They saw us and cried, "Hey, here they are! Here they are!"

We entered.

"Here, Bastien, to the health of our good king!" cried Master Jean, filling up the glasses.



My father, with tears in his eyes, answered, "Yes, yes, Jean, to the good health of our king! Long live our good king!"

It was the fashion then to believe that the king did everything. He was looked up to as a sort of god who watched over his children. My father, therefore, loved the king very much.

We drank and almost immediately the notables came in. They were the same who had come in the day before. But they brought with them Grandfather Létumier, who was so old that he could hardly see, and who had to be led step by step to prevent his falling. Despite all this he wanted to vote, and while the others were filling up the glasses, and each saying his say and shouting, "Well, here we are! It is done! They will know the people of Baraques. We will all vote together, you may be sure!" While the handshaking was going on, and they were laughing and clinking glasses, the poor old man was saying, "Ah, how long life is! How long life is! But, anyway, when one lives to see a day like this, he does not regret all he has suffered."

Master Jean answered, "You are right, Père Létumier. One does not count the rainy days, the hail and snowstorms when the harvest comes. Here are the sheaves. They have cost us a lot of work, it is true, but we are going to thresh them, fan and bolt them. We will have bread, and please God, our children also. Long live the good king!" And we all repeated, "Long live the good king!" The glasses rang again. We could have embraced one another. Finally we all started arm in arm, father and I the last.

All the Baraques folk already gathered about the foun-

tain, seeing us coming, followed with the clarionet and the drum. I have never heard anything like it. All the country was full of music and the sound of bells. From all sides you could see on the four roads files of people dancing, lifting their hats, throwing their caps in the air, and shouting, "Long live the good king! Long live the father of the people!" The bells answered one another from mountain height to valley depth; there was no end to it. And the nearer we came to the city the louder the chorus grew. On the church, from the windows of the barracks, on the hospital, everywhere the flags floated, the flags of white silk with the lilies of gold. Never have I seen anything so grand.

Later, the victories of the republic, the cannon booming on our ramparts, also elated our hearts, when we cried with pride, "Vive France! Long live the republic!" But at this time we were not thinking of killing men. We were thinking of gaining everything at one stroke, and every one embraced every one else.

These things can hardly be described. As we were approaching the city, we met the Curé Christopher, at the head of his parishioners, coming out of one of the side roads. We stopped and lifted our hats and cried all together, "Long live the good king!"

The curé and Master Jean embraced, and then, laughing, singing, playing the clarionet, and beating the drums, the two parishes came to the outskirts of the city, which was already full of people. I can see now the sentinel of the regiment of La Fère, standing in the half-circle with his great white coat with iron-gray revers, his immense three-cornered hat on his powdered wig, armed with a big musket, telling us to stop. The bridges were crowded

with wagons and carts. All the old people insisted upon being driven to the city hall, all wanted to vote before they died, and many of them were weeping like children. After all this, let any one say that in our day the people had not an extraordinary amount of good sense. From the first to the last everybody wanted his rights.

We waited there more than twenty minutes before being able to pass the bridge, on account of the great crush. But you should have seen the city itself, the streets full of people, and innumerable flags at the windows. You should have heard the cry of "Long live the king!" beginning sometimes on the market-place, then near the arsenal, or the gate called Germany, and making the rounds of the ramparts and the fortifications like the rolling of thunder.

Once you had passed the portcullis, you could neither advance nor go back. Nor could you see four feet in front of you. All the taverns, inns, and beer-shops, St. Christopher Street, Red Heart, and Capuchin streets, all the length of the barracks and the hospital, away into the grain market hall, you could see but one solid block of people. The mass of the Holy Ghost had begun, but how could one approach the church? The patrols of the regiment of La Fère themselves cried, "Look out! look out!" in vain. They were pushed into all sorts of corners and compelled to remain with their muskets at rest, not being able to stir.

Then Master Jean bethought himself that the inn of his friend Jacques Renaudot was near at hand, and without saying a word, he made a sign to us to follow him. He dragged us on; that is, the Curé Christopher, Valentine, my father, and myself, as far as the steps of the White

Horse Inn. But we could enter only through the back door into the kitchen, for the big dining-room was as full as an egg, and they had had to open all the doors and windows to enable the people to breathe.

Mother Jeannette Renaudot received us well, and took us upstairs into a room which was still empty, where they brought us wine, some beer, and a pasty, and anything else we wanted.

The others below looked around on all sides. They thought we were lost in the crowd. Yet we could not have called to them nor asked them all to come up. So we remained as we were, only about one o'clock in the afternoon, when a good half of the villages had already voted, and as those of Baraques were turning the corner of Fouquet Street to go to the market-place, we went out, and cutting through Hospital Street, we arrived at the city hall first. They thought we had been there a long time, and shouted, "Here they are, here they are!"

The old house of the commune, with its belfry and large windows open above the clock, its archway, under which the villagers disappeared one after another, was humming from top to bottom like a drum. From a distance you would have thought it was an ant-hill.

The Baraques people were to pass before those of Lutzembourg. They were already between the old cistern and the great staircase, which leads to the archway. Master Jean, Valentine, my father, and I were walking at the head, but as the people of Vilschberg were not through voting, we had to wait quite a little while on the steps. At this moment, how each heart beat at the thought of what he was going to do! Behind us under the old elms after the cries of "Long live the good king!"

a great silence followed. In one of these moments I heard a clear voice, a voice that we all knew, the voice of little Marguerite Chauvel, who cried, after the fashion of almanac peddlers:

“ ‘What is the Third Estate?’ ‘What is the Third Estate?’ by Monsieur the Abbé Sieyès. Buy ‘What is the Third Estate’—‘The Assembly of Bailiffs’ of Monsignor the Duke of Orleans, who wants the ‘Assembly of Bailiffs?’ ”

Turning to Master Jean, I said, “Do you hear little Marguerite?”

“Yes, yes, I have heard her for a long time already,” he answered. “What brave people these Chauvels are! They can boast of having done good to our country. You ought to go and ask Marguerite to send her father. He cannot be far off. It would please her to hear her name mentioned.”

Immediately I elbowed my way through the crowd and made my way through the market-place to the town hall. I saw Marguerite, with her pack on a bench in the Place of the Elms, busily selling the little books. You cannot imagine a little witch like her, stopping the peasants, holding them by the sleeve, and talking to them in both French and German. She was right in the whirl of the selling, and for the first time the brightness of her black eyes astonished me, in spite of the thousand other thoughts that were passing through my mind.

I came quite up to the bench, and as I approached, Marguerite seized me also by the coat, and cried, “Monsieur, Monsieur, ‘What is the Third Estate?’ Here you have ‘The Third Estate,’ by Monsieur the Abbé Sieyès, for six liards.”

I said to her, "You don't recognize me, Marguerite?"

"Why, it is Michel," she said, letting me go, and laughing heartily.

She was wiping the perspiration which rolled down her brown cheeks, and threw back her heavy, black, unbraided hair. We were delighted to find each other there.

"How you work, Marguerite! What pains you give yourself!" I said to her.

"Ah," she said, "this is a great day. We must sell." And she showed me the edge of her skirt and her little feet all muddy. "Look in what a condition I am," she said. "Since six o'clock last night we have been on the go. We came from Luneville with fifty dozen of 'The Third Estate.' Since morning we have been selling and selling. Look, this is all we have left—ten or twelve dozen!"

She looked so proud, and I was holding her hand all surprised.

"And your father, where is he?" I asked.

"I do not know. He is running around the city. He goes into the inns. Oh, we shall not keep a single copy of the 'Third Estate.' I am sure he has already sold all of his." Suddenly she drew away her little hand. "Go," she said, "the Baraques people are going into the city hall."

"But I am not twenty-five, Marguerite, and I cannot vote."

"All the same, we are losing time in talking together," and at once she began to sell again. "Hey, Monsieur, 'The Third Estate,' 'The Third Estate'!"

Then I went off quite surprised. I had always seen Marguerite by her father's side, and now she seemed to

me quite another being. Her courage astonished me, and I thought, "She bears herself better in this affair than you do, Michel." And even in the midst of the crowd, and on the balcony, I pondered over it still.

"Well?" asked my godfather, the moment he saw me, "Well, Michel?"

"Marguerite is on the square alone. Her father is in the town with his pamphlets."

At that moment we came down from the balcony to the grand corridor which led to the entrance for audience with the prevost. The turn of the Béraques folk had come, and as it was the custom to call out the votes in a loud voice, we heard the voting long before entering the room: "Master Jean Leroux!—Mathurin Chauvel! Jean Leroux!—Mathurin Chauvel! Master Jean Leroux!—Chauvel!"

Master Jean, his face all flushed, said to me, "What a pity that Chauvel is not here! It would be a pleasure to him." And I, turning around, saw directly behind us Chauvel, quite astonished at what he heard.

"It is you who have done this," he said to Master Jean.

"Yes," said my godfather, joyfully.

"As far as you are concerned, it does not surprise me," said Chauvel, seizing his hand. "I have known you for a long time. But what really surprises me and makes me rejoice is to hear Catholics nominating a Calvinist. The people are putting aside the old superstitions. We shall win the victory!"

We went forward quietly and turned, two by two, to enter into the great hall. A moment later we saw, in front of the crowd which stood bareheaded, Monsieur the Pre-

vost Schneider, in his robe of black bordered with white, his cap on his head, his sword at his side. He was a man of fifty years. The aldermen and the syndics, in black robes with black scarfs over their shoulders, were seated a few paces lower down. At the back against the wall was a great crucifix. That is all that comes back to me now.

The names of Jean Leroux and Mathurin Chauvel followed each other like the ticks of a clock. The first to say "Nicolas Létumier and Chauvel" was Master Jean himself. Everybody noticed this, and the prevost smiled. The first who said "Jean Leroux and Létumier" was Chauvel—and that also was noticed. But the prevost had known him for a long time, and did not smile. Lieutenant Desjardins leaned over and whispered something in his ear.

I had passed to the right, as I had no vote to cast. Chauvel, Master Jean, and I came out together. We had a thousand pains to get through the crowd again. And when outside, instead of going by the square, we had to pass out by the rear, under the old hall. There Chauvel left us at once, saying, "In the evening at Baraques we will chat." He had still some of the little books to sell.

Master Jean and I returned alone to our place very thoughtful. The people had left. They seemed tired, but nevertheless joyful. Some of them had drunk a little too much, and were singing and raising their arms as they passed along the road. My father and Valentine returned later. We might have searched for them a long time without finding them.

The same evening after supper Chauvel and his daughter came as usual. Chauvel had a large packet of papers



in his pannier. They were the discourses pronounced in the morning before the elections, in the great hall of the city building, by Monsieur the Prevost and his lieutenant, and also the proceedings and the certificate of appearance of the clergy, the nobles, and the Third Estate. The speeches were very good, and as Master Jean was astonished that people who spoke to us so beautifully could always treat us so badly, Chauvel said, with a smile:

“In the future it will be necessary to have things more in accord—both actions and words. These gentlemen see that the people are stronger and they take off their hats to us. But it is also necessary for the people to realize their power and to use it, so that everything shall be done according to justice.”

## CHAPTER XII

### MICHEL FINDS HE HAS A HEART

At this time I must tell you of something which makes me feel tender whenever I think of it. It is the happiness of my life.

First of all, you should know that the month of April had been set as the time for us to present the petition of our complaints and grievances; we had to gather at the bailiff's at Lixheim. Those who went lodged in the inns there. Master Jean and Chauvel went away every Monday morning and returned only on Saturday evening. This went on for three weeks.

The disturbances in the mountain region were also recounted then—the proclamations, the disputes for the abolition of the taxes, of the excises, of the militia, of the vote by head and by class, and a thousand other things of which one had never thought. The people of Alsace and those of Lorraine filled the inn in a great crowd. They drank, they struck the table with their fists, and generally conducted themselves like wolves. One would have thought they were about to strangle one another, and yet they were of one accord, like every other class of the people. They wanted what we wanted. But for this what battles we would have seen!

Valentine worked at the forge opposite me. We mended the carts and shod the horses of all those who passed. Sometimes I also tried to argue with Valentine,

for he believed that everything would be lost if the seigniors and the bishops were defeated. I wished to get the better of him, but he was such a brave fellow that I did not venture to give him pain. His sole consolation seemed to be in talking of a hut which he had in the forest back of Roche-Plate, where he went to capture titmice; he also had grasshoppers in the heather and snares in the passes, by permission of the inspector, Monsieur Claude Coudray, to whom he brought from time to time a string of thrush or wrens, as a sign of recognition. Here was a fellow who was in the midst of a great convulsion which every one could see was just at hand. He could think of nothing but his bird decoys, and said to me:

“The nesting season approaches, Michel, and after the nests will come the liming; then the great passage of thrushes which descend on Alsace when the grapes begin to ripen. The year has begun well. If this good weather only continues we shall take quantities of them.”

His tall figure straightened, he smiled with his great toothless mouth, his eyes grew round. He already saw the thrushes hanging by the neck from his nooses; and he pulled out a hair from the tail of every horse we shod to catch his grasshoppers with.

As for me, I thought of the great matters of the counties, and principally of the abolition of the militia, because I had to draw the lots in September, and this interested me more than anything else. But other matters soon took my attention.

After a time, one evening while entering our hut, I found mother Létumier spinning with my mother, alongside of father and of Mathurine and little Étienne, who

were weaving baskets. They were quite at home, and worked all the evening up to ten o'clock. These Létumiers were rich for the times. Their daughter Annette, a tall blonde, a little auburn, but white and fresh, was a good creature. I often saw her coming and going before the forge, with a wooden pail under her arm, as it were to get some water at the spring, and turn around to look at me sweetly. She wore a short skirt, a bodice of red linen with straps, and her arms bared to the elbows.

I saw all these things without paying any attention to them or thinking about them, nor suspecting anything. In the evening when I saw her spinning, I said a few pleasant words, little nothings, such as boys will say to girls, through politeness, through the joy of being young. It is natural, and one does not think any more about it. But one day my mother said to me:

"Listen, Michel! You would do well to go and dance on Sunday at the Rondinet de la Cigogne, and to put on your velvet jacket, your red vest, and your silver heart."

This astonished me, and I asked why. She answered me, smiling and looking at father, "You shall see."

My father was making baskets thoughtfully, and he said, "The Létumiers are rich. You ought to dance with their daughter. It would be a good match."

Hearing this I became troubled. It was not that I did not like the girl, but the thought of marrying had never occurred to me. In a word, despite all, through curiosity and foolishness, and also because it pleased father, I answered, "As you will. Only I am too young to marry. I have not drawn for the conscription."

"Anyway," said mother, "it will cost you nothing to

go, and it will please those people. It is politeness; that is all."

Then I answered, "All right!" And the following Sunday after vespers I went. As I descended the hill, dreaming of these things, I felt astonished at what I was doing.

At that time old mother Paquette, the widow of Dieu-donné Bernel, kept the inn of the Stork at Lutzelbourg, a little to the left of the wooden bridge, and behind where to-day is the garden at the foot of the hill, they danced under the elm trees. There were many people, for Monsieur Christopher was not like the other curés. He seemed not to see anything, not to hear anything, not even the clarionet of Jean Rat. They drank white wine of Alsace, and ate fried fish.

I went down the street and mounted the stairs at the end of the courtyard, while looking at the boys and girls dancing on the terrace. . . . I had hardly gotten to the top under the first arbor when Mother Létumier cried to me, "Here, Michel! Here, Michel, this way!"

The lovely Annette was there, and she blushed red when she saw me. I took her hand and asked her for a waltz. She called, "Oh, Monsieur Michel! Oh, Monsieur Michel!" raising her eyes and following me. At all times, before as well as after the Revolution, the girls were all alike; they each liked one fellow better than another.

I waltzed with her five or six times, I don't remember which, and we laughed. Mother Létumier seemed delighted and Annette was red, with downcast eyes. Naturally nobody spoke of politics. We drank, we joked, and broke a pretzel together. "This is life," I

thought, "Mother will be pleased. They will compliment her on her boy."

But in the evening near six o'clock I had enough of it, and without thinking of anything else, I went down into the street, and cut short through the pine grove between the rocks.

It was extraordinarily hot for the season. Everything was green and in flower. The violets, the whortleberries, the strawberries—everything was spreading and covering the path with greenness. One would have thought it was June. All these things are before me as if of yesterday. And yet I am a few years older; oh, yes!

At last on the top of the rocks on the plateau I came upon the highway again, from which one can see the roofs of Baraques, and two or three hundred feet before me I saw a little girl covered with dust, with a big square pannier across her shoulders, under the weight of which her back was bent. She was walking, walking. I said to myself, "This is Marguerite. Yes, it is she," and I quickened my steps, I ran. "Hey, Marguerite, is it you?"

She turned around, her brown face shining with perspiration, her long hair almost covering her face, and eyes so bright. She turned around and laughed, saying, "Hey, there, Michel, this is a happy meeting!"

I looked at the great strap which was bound around her shoulder. I was astonished and troubled.

"Well, well, you seem to be somewhat weary," she said; "have you come far?"

"No; I have come from Lutzelbourg, from the dance."

"Ah, good, good!" she said, resuming her walk. "I

come from Dabo. I have run over the whole county. I sold there the 'Third Estate.' I arrived just at the right moment, when the deputies of the parish were coming together. The day before yesterday in the morning I was at Lixheim, in Lorraine."

"You are then made of iron?" I said, walking close at her side.

"Oh, of iron? Well, not quite. I am a bit tired just the same; but the grand stroke has been given. You see! and it goes." She was laughing, but she must have been very tired, for, when we approached the wall bordering the old Furst orchard, she put her basket on the edge and said, "Let us talk a little, Michel, and take breath."

Then I took her basket from her and pushed it entirely on the wall, saying, "Yes, let us breathe. Ah, Marguerite, you are plying a harder trade than any of us."

"Yes, but it goes," she said, in the same tone and with the same look as her father. "But we can say that we have covered a lot of ground. We have already regained our ancient rights, and now we are going to ask for others. They must all be given back, all. Everything must be equal. The imposts must be the same for everybody, and every one must be able to make a living by his courage and his work. And we must have liberty. There, now!"

She was looking at me, and I was lost in admiration, thinking, "Who are we, anyway, beside these people? What have we done for the country? What have we suffered?" She was looking at me covertly and continued:

"Yes, that's the way. Now that the memorials are

almost ready, we will sell them by the thousands. Meanwhile, I must run around alone. We have only our trade to live by, and I must work for two, since my father must work for everyone. The day before yesterday I carried him twelve francs. That will be enough for a week. I had earned fifteen. Since then I earned four, therefore, I have seven left. I will go to see him the day after morrow. It will go. We will succeed. And during the States General we will sell all that will be said there—at the Third Estate, I mean. We will not let go, no! This spirit must be kept awake. Everything must become known. People must become educated. You understand?"

"Yes, yes, Marguerite," I said; "you talk like your father. It almost makes me weep."

She had seated herself on the wall beside her basket. The sun had just set. The sky in the direction of Mittenbrunn was like gold with great red veins, and the moon, pale and blue, without clouds, was rising at the left above the old ruins of the Lutzelbourg castle. I was looking at Marguerite who had ceased talking and was looking at these things with her eyes upturned. I was looking at her. She was leaning her elbow on her basket, and as I could not help gazing at her, she saw it and said, "I am all covered with dust, am I not?" I asked her, without answering, "How old are you now?"

"In two weeks after Easter I shall be sixteen. And you?"

"I am over eighteen years old."

"Yes, and you are strong," she said, jumping down from the wall and passing the strap over her shoulders. "Help me! Good, I am all right."



Just by lifting the basket I felt how heavy it was, and I said, "Oh, it is too heavy for you, Marguerite. You ought to let me carry it." Then she, walking with her back bent, looked at me sideways smiling, and said, "Bah, when one works to gain his rights, nothing is too heavy; and we will have them, we will have them!"

I did not dare reply. My heart was ill at ease. I was full of admiration for Chauvel and his daughter. I set them up high in my estimation.

Marguerite no longer seemed tired. She said from time to time, "Yes, over there at Lixheim they have defended themselves beautifully, the nobles and the monks. But they have received their answer. They have been told that which they deserve to hear, and all this will be in the memorial—nothing will be forgotten. The king will know what the people think, and the nation also. Only we must have the States General. Father thinks they will be good. I believe it. We will see and we shall support our deputies. They can depend on us."

We had come to Baraques, and I accompanied Marguerite as far as their door. It was already dark. She took from her pocket a big key, and said to me, as she was entering, "Another day passed. Well, good night, Michel," and I bade her good night.

When I reached home mother and father were there waiting for me. They looked at me.

"Well?" said mother.

"Well, we have danced."

"And what after?"

"After—I return."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"You did not wait for them?"

"No."

"And you have not said anything?"

"What did you want me to say?"

Then she became angry and began to scream. "You are nothing but a fool. And that girl is more foolish than you to want you. What are we compared to them?" She was green with anger.

I looked at her quietly without answering. Father said, "Let Michel alone. Don't scream so loud." But she would listen to nothing, and continued, "Has any one ever seen such an imbecile? Here I who have been for the last six months drawing that big she goat of a Létumier to us for the boy's good—an old miserly woman, who talks only of her hemp fields, of their cows—I stand all with patience. And after all this, just when he can grasp everything, that fellow refuses. Perhaps he thinks he is a great lord, and that people are going to run after him. Great goodness, that one should have such fools in his family. It makes me shudder!"

I wanted to answer, but she continued, "Be still! You will end on a dung heap—and we, too." And, as I was silent, she began again, "Yes, monsieur refuses. Then spend your time in feeding your Nicolases, Michels, good for nothings, who get themselves shanghaied. For surely this fellow will be trapped somewhere. Good-for-nothing girls are not lacking in the country. If he refuses, it is because he loves another."

She turned around with her broom, looking at me over her shoulder. I could stand no more of it. I turned pale and went up the ladder. Since Claude had left, Étienne and I slept up under the thatch. Downstairs mother

continued to scream, "Ah, you run away? I see clearly, don't I? You rogue! You do not dare to remain!"

Shame was stifling me. I threw myself onto the big box, my arms over my face, thinking. "Oh, my God! Is it possible?" And still I heard my mother screaming louder and louder, "Oh, the fool! oh, the rogue!"

Father was trying to quiet her. This lasted a long time. The tears covered my face. Only toward one o'clock did everything become quiet in the hut. But I could not sleep. I felt too miserable and thought:

"There! You have worked from the age of ten. Others go away. You remain. You pay the debts of the house. You give up your last farthing to support the old people. And because you do not want to marry this girl to catch her wealth, because you do not want to marry the hemp field, you are a good-for-nothing. You are no more than a Nicolas, a fool, and a rogue."

Indignation was getting the better of me. Little Étienne was sleeping quietly beside me, but I could not close my eyes. I was turning and turning again and again those things in my head, and perspiration covered my body. I felt stifled in the garret, and needed air.

At last, about four o'clock in the morning, I got up and went down. Father was not sleeping, and he asked me, "Is it you, Michel? Are you going out?"

"Yes, father, I am going."

I would have liked to talk to him. He was the best and kindest man in the world. But what could I say to him? Mother was not sleeping, either. Her eyes shone in the darkness, but she said nothing, and I went out.

Outside the mist was rising from the valley. I took the cattle-path under the rocks. The mist penetrated

through my smock frock and cooled my blood, and I went straight ahead. What I thought—God knows it to-day. I wanted to leave Baraques, to go to Saverne or Quatre-Vents. An assistant blacksmith need never be out of work. The thought of abandoning father, Mathurine, and little Étienne nearly broke my heart. But I knew that mother would never forget the fine fields of the Létumiers, and she would throw them at my head to the end of time. So many thoughts go through one's head at such moments. One no longer thinks of them, he no longer wants to think of them. They are better forgotten.

All that I remember now is that, near five o'clock, after the mist, the sun rose beautifully, the sun of spring-time. The coolness had done me good, and I cried within myself, "Michel, you will remain! You will stand everything. You cannot abandon father, no! Nor little Étienne, either. Nor your little sister. It is your duty to support them. Let mother scream. You will remain."

With these thoughts I began to ascend towards the village through the orchards and gardens that bordered the slope. I was strengthening myself. The sun was getting hotter and hotter, the birds sang. Everything was red. The dew trembled at the ends of the leaves. I also saw the white smoke ascend from the chimney of the forge slowly toward the sky. Valentine was already up.

I quickened my steps. As I was nearing the village, suddenly, on the other side of the fence bordering the path, I heard some one digging. I looked. Marguerite was there, behind their house, digging up a little corner of their orchard to plant potatoes. Remembering how tired she had been the evening before, I was very much

surprised. I paused and leaned against the hedge and looked at her long. The more I looked the more I admired. There she was, courageous and industrious, in a short skirt and thick sabots, thinking of nothing but her work. I saw for the first time that her cheeks were brown and rounded. Her forehead was low, with thick, dark hair, growing low over the brow with a fine downy growth over the temples, in which the perspiration collected. She resembled her father. Her limbs were spare, her small back strong, her lips compressed, and as she set her foot on the spade, you could hear the roots crack. The sun, which shone through the big apple trees in full bloom, spread over her with the moving shadows of the leaves. The earth was steaming; everything shone, and one felt that it was going to be very warm. After having looked at Marguerite for a while, the words of my mother came back to me, "He loves another," and I said to myself, "Yes, it is true. I love another. This one has neither fields nor meadows nor cows, but she has courage. She will be my wife, and we will have all the rest. But first I must win her. And I shall win her by my labor."

Since then I have never changed my mind. I respected Marguerite more than ever, and never did the thought occur to me that she might become the wife of another. Having formed this resolution within myself, as I saw some people coming down the path to go to work in the fields, I continued on my way. My mind was fully made up, filled with courage, and even contentment. As I came into the street, Valentine, with his shirt sleeves rolled up on his long arms, and his chest and neck bare, was waiting for me before the forge.

"What a beautiful day, Michell!" he shouted, as he

saw me coming, "What a beautiful day! Ah, if it were Sunday we would take a fine walk in the woods."

"Yes," I answered him, laughing and undoing my smock frock, "but it is Monday, Papa la Ramee. What are we going to do this morning?"

"Yesterday, in the evening, old Rantzau brought us two dozen axes to repair for the Harberg, and then Christopher Besme's wagon needs a new axle."

"Good, good," I said to him. "We can begin." Never had I set to work more heartily. The iron was in the fire. Valentine took the tongs and the small hammer, I the sledge, and we started off.

Every time in my life when I had clearly perceived what I wanted, and instead of pursuing dreamily my routine from day to day I had decided some difficult question which demanded attention and courage, good humor returned to me. I sang, I whistled, I wielded my hammer like an old hand. The worst kind of dull times come from having no ideas. But I now had one which pleased me extraordinarily.

Yet one must not think that it was an easy thing to succeed with one's ideas in '89; oh, no! That very morning at seven o'clock, when Marguerite was passing near the forge with her big basket, on her way to sell her pamphlets, Valentine himself reminded me that seeing through one's ideas was not a small matter. He did not suspect anything, and that is why each one of his words was worth its weight in gold.

"Look here, Michel," he said, pointing to the little girl who was already on the heights of Baraques. "Is it not terrible to see a child of sixteen with such a load on her back? Through rain and snow and sun she goes on,

brave to her finger tips. She never turns back from any hardship, and if they were not heretics, they would be martyrs. But the devil urges them on to sell those evil little books, to destroy our holy religion and the order established by the Lord in this world. Instead of deserving rewards they deserve the rope."

"Oh, Valentine!" I said; "the rope?"

"Yes, the rope," he repeated, lengthening out his nose and pressing his lips hard; "and even the stake, if justice were given them. Is it for us to defend them when their good sense, their honesty, and their courage are used against us? It is like the wolves and the foxes. The more they show of craftiness, the more haste one should make to destroy them. If they were stupid like sheep they would not be dangerous. On the contrary, one could shear them, and even keep them decently in a stable. But these Calvinists listen to nothing. They are a veritable plague."

"And yet they are creatures of the Lord like us, Valentine!"

"Creatures of the Lord!" he shouted, raising his arms. "If they were creatures of the Lord, would the curés refuse to register their births, marriages, and deaths? Would they be buried in the field far from consecrated ground, like beasts, like animals? Would they be forbidden to hold office, as Chauvel himself says they are? Would everybody turn against them? No, Michel! It grieves me, for aside from their trade, one can reproach them with nothing. But Master Jean does wrong to let these people in his house. This Chauvel will end badly. He has done too much. The people of Baraques are fools to have nominated him. For when once order is

reestablished, I warn you the first to be grabbed will be Chauvel and his daughter, and perhaps Master Jean and all of us, to be purified for a few years in prison. I will not have deserved it. But I recognize the justice of the king just the same. Justice is justice. We shall have deserved it. It is sad, but justice before everything," saying which he bent his great back, clasping his hands with an air of resignation, and closing his eyes thoughtfully, while I thought, "How can one be so limited in intelligence? What he says is contrary to good sense."

Nevertheless, I saw very well that all the people would be against me if I asked Marguerite in marriage, and that the people of Baraques would be capable of stoning me to death. But nothing seemed to count with me, and I was astonished at my own courage.

In the evening of the same day when it was time to return to our hut, I went without fear, as I was resolved to hear everything from my mother without answering a word. As I was approaching the house, my father, pale and fearful, came to meet me, making me a sign to enter a deep lane between the orchards, that we might not be seen. I followed him, and the poor man said to me, tremblingly:

"Your mother scolded you harshly yesterday, my child. Ah, it is terrible! Now, what are you going to do? You are going away, is it not so?" He was looking at me all pale. I saw that he was in the greatest anxiety, and I answered:

"No, father, no! How could I leave you, little Étienne, and Mathurine? That is not possible."

His face resumed an expression of happiness. He seemed to live again.



"Ah, it is good," he said. "I knew that you would remain, Michel. I am so pleased that I spoke to you. She has no reason. She loses her head. Ah, I also have suffered much in my life. But all is well. You remain. All is well." He was holding my hand, and I felt myself all stirred up.

"Yes," I answered, "I shall remain, father. And if mother scolds, why she is my mother, I shall listen to her without answering." Then he became reassured.

"It is well," he said; "only, listen. You will remain here a few moments. I shall go back alone, for if your mother saw us together, she would make it hard for me. You understand?"

"Yes, father, go!"

At once he left the lane, and in a few minutes I followed leisurely and entered the house. Mother sat near the hearth with her teeth set, spinning. She probably thought I was going to say something, announce my departure. She followed me with shining eyes, and prepared to cast me off. Little Étienne and Mathurine were sitting at her feet making a basket without daring to lift their eyes. Father was chopping wood, looking at me quietly and secretly. But I pretended not to see anything, and said, simply, "Good night, father, good night, mother! I am very tired to-day. We have worked hard at the forge," and I mounted the ladder. No one had answered me. I lay down pleased with what I had done, and that night I slept well.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MICHEL MENDS A SPADE

The following day, when I went to work very early in the morning, I saw the inn of the Three Pigeons full of people. There were more coming all along the road, some in wagons, some on foot. The news spread that the memorial of our complaints and grievances was being completed, and that it was going to be carried to Metz, to be added to those of the other baillies.\*

Since the day of the elections a great number of the deputies of the baillies had had their wives and children come to Lixheim. These people were returning home, delighted to get back to their nests. They shouted in passing, "It is done. This evening the others are coming. Everything is arranged."

Valentine was also delighted, for soon we were to see Master Jean at the forge again. When people have worked ten years together it is very lonesome to remain alone for three weeks, and to be deprived of the sight of such a good big face, which shouts to you from time to time, "Now, boys, go on!" or "Stop! Let us breathe a minute!" You miss something and feel all off the track.

We hung up our jackets and talked over the good news, also looking at the crowds that stopped at the inn.

\**Baillies* here signifies a division of France for electoral purposes, corresponding nearly to the English shire or our own county.

Nicole and Dame Catharine were carrying out chairs to help the women get out of the wagons. And what compliments, what salutations! For all these women were old acquaintances, and since their husbands had become deputies, there were a great many more salutations exchanged and ceremonies. They called one another "Madame."

Valentine laughed heartily at this. "There, Michel," he said, "there is the Countess Gros-Jacques, or the Baroness Jarnique. Look! now we can learn fine manners!"

He was not above a little malice, just enough to mock at those who were not noble. Seeing them making profound bows, he laughed till the tears stood in his eyes—and wound up by saying:

"This becomes them about as well as lace would become Finaude, Father Benedic's donkey. Ah, the rogues! And to think that the rabble dares to revolt against His Majesty the king, against the queen, and all the high authorities! To think that they should be clamoring for rights! Ah, I would give you rights! I would give you rights! I would send you to grass, and if you were not pleased I would double my Swiss guard, and my gendarmerie!"

He reasoned like this under his breath, while blowing the bellows and holding the tongs in the fire. I knew all his thoughts, for he seemed to need to hear himself talk, in order to understand himself—and it gave him lots of pleasure.

At last we took up our work again. The anvil had rung for three hours, the sparks were flying—we were now thinking only of our work—when, suddenly, a

shadow advanced toward the little door. I turned about. It was Marguerite. She held something under her apron, and said to us, "I am bringing you some work. My spade is broken. Could you fix it for me? For this evening, or for to-morrow morning?"

Valentine took the dented spade, whose handle also was broken. I was overjoyed. Marguerite was looking at me, and I smiled at her as if to say, "Never fear! I will fix it beautifully for you. You shall see my work!"

She smiled at me at last, seeing how happy it made me to render her the slightest service.

"For to-night or to-morrow morning," said Valentine, "that is not possible, but if you come back to-morrow evening—"

"Bah! bah," I cried, "this is not a great affair. We have much to do, it is true, but Marguerite's spade must be attended to first of all. Leave this to me, Valentine. I will see to it."

"Well, it is all the same to me," he said, "but it will take you more time than you think, and we are very busy."

Marguerite was laughing. "So," she said, "I can count on you, Michel?"

"Yes, yes, Marguerite. You shall have it this evening."

She went away, and immediately I set the little anvil on its stand, put the old iron into the fire, and grasped the handle of the bellows. Valentine looked at me as if surprised. My haste astonished him. He did not say anything, but I felt that my ears were getting red, and that the color was spreading to my cheeks. So I began to sing the blacksmith's song:

"Good blacksmith, light thy fire—"

And he, as was his habit, followed me, letting his voice swell, and whining the words through his nose, droning them out after the rather plaintive manner of all blacksmiths. Our sledges fell in cadence, and the thought that I was working for Marguerite filled my heart to overflowing with contentment. I do not believe I ever did better work in my life. My sledge rose in the air even more rapidly than it fell upon the anvil, and the iron flattened out as though it had been of dough.

I forged my spade first hot, then cold; I gave it a beautiful square form, fairly long, light, with the line in the center, the cutting edge like the tail of a swallow, the neck so rounded and finely welded that Valentine paused from time to time to admire my work; and I heard him murmur to himself:

"To each one his gift: Master Jean has no equal in shoeing a horse; I have an eye for fellies and stocks. Yes, it is one of heaven's gifts, and none will contradict me. Michel will be for spades, shovels, picks, and plowshares. It is his work, his gift from the Lord." He went off, returned, and several times demanded of me, "Do you want me to help you?"

"No, no," I cried, quite confident and happy that my work was so well advanced. And I began to sing again:

"Good blacksmith—"

Each one went his pace. At last, about five o'clock, my spade was finished. It shone like a silver plate and rang like a bell. Valentine took it. He examined it for some time, and then, looking at me, he said: "The old man Rebstock, of Ribeaupierre, who sold scythes, spades, and plowshares all over Switzerland, old Rebstock him-

self might put his great R on this spade and say, 'I made it.' Yes, Michel, the Chauvels can boast of having a good and fine-looking spade, which will last perhaps longer than themselves. There. that is your first masterpiece!"

One might think that I was happy, for Valentine knew what he was talking about; but the glory of his praises was nothing compared to the pleasure I was about to have in carrying the spade to Marguerite. A handle only was now lacking, and I wanted one of ash, quite new. So, without waiting, I ran to our neighbor, the old woodworker, Rigaud, who, his great spectacles astride of his nose, set to work and made me a handle just such as I wished; well rounded, the knob not too large, and all solidly fitted in; in a word, something light and strong. I paid him at once and returned, putting the spade behind our door until the day's work should be ended.

At seven o'clock I washed my hands, my face, and my neck at the pump before the forge, and at that moment, by chance, I saw down the road Marguerite seated on a little bench in front of their house, busy peeling potatoes. Then I showed her the spade from a distance, and when I came up to her, quite happy, I cried, "There! what do you think of that, Marguerite?"

She took the spade and looked at it with wonder. I scarcely breathed. "Ah," she said, looking at me, "it was Valentine who did this."

I answered her, all red in the face, "So you don't believe I know how to do anything?"

"Oh, no; but it is so beautiful. Do you know, Michel, you make a splendid workman!" She smiled at me, and I had become quite overjoyed when she contin-

ued, "But that will cost me a great deal. What do I owe you?"

When I heard this I was amazed and answered almost angrily: "Do you want to hurt me, Marguerite? How—shall I work for you? I bring you the spade as a gift. . . . I am happy to give you pleasure, and here you ask me what is the cost."

Seeing my sad face, she cried, "But you are not reasonable, Michel. All your trouble deserves some payment. Then there is the coal for which Master Jean has paid, and besides, you owe him your day's work."

She was right, and I saw it. But that did not prevent me from answering, "No, no; it is not for that." And what made me feel worse was that at this moment Pére Chauvel, in his old gray smock frock, with his stick in his hand, took me by the shoulder and said, "Well, well, what is it now, Michel? And so you also are arguing?" He was coming back from Lixheim, and he looked at me with much pleasure. As for me, I quite lost my voice, for I was greatly troubled.

"See!" said Marguerite, "he has mended my spade, and now he is not willing to take any money."

"Bah," said Chauvel, "and why not?"

Happily a bright idea entered my head, and I cried: "No, you cannot compel me to take a farthing, Monsieur Chauvel. Have you not loaned me books a hundred times? Have you not placed my sister Lisbeth at Vasselonne? And now are you not helping all the country to regain its rights? When I do anything for you, it is through friendship, through gratitude. I would be a beggar if I said to you, 'This costs so much.' That goes against my nature."

He studied me with his sharp, quick little eyes, and answered: "It is well, it is well; but I have not done all this that I shall no longer pay people. If I had done this with such ideas in my mind, I should look upon myself as a beggar. Do you understand, Michel?"

Then, not knowing what else to say, I almost felt like weeping, and exclaimed, "Ah, Monsieur Chauvel, you hurt me."

He was undoubtedly much touched, and replied to me, "No, Michel, no, that is not my intention, for I regard you as a brave and honest boy, and to prove what I say, I accept your present. Is it not so, Marguerite; we both accept?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "since it gives him so much pleasure, we cannot refuse."

Then Chauvel examined the spade, and praised my work, saying that I was a good workman, and that, later on, he expected to see me master, and well fixed in my affairs. I had become contented again, and as he entered the house after having shaken hands with me, and Marguerite had cried to me, "Good night, Michel, and thank you," my trouble was forgotten. I was rejoicing at having answered so well, for the look that Chauvel gave me as I was speaking had disconcerted me, and if my reasons had not been so good, he might have imagined something else. I even considered this as a warning to be more prudent, and to hide my thoughts concerning Marguerite, until the day I could ask her to marry me. While on the way back to the inn, I reasoned in this way.

As I entered the great dining-room, Master Jean had but just returned, and was hanging his heavy coat in the closet, shouting all the time: "Nicole, Nicole, bring my



invited by his old comrade, Jean Leroux. For we are old comrades. We drew at the conscription together in '57. You will tell him that. To-morrow at noon sharp. Do you understand, Michel?" He was holding my hand, and I answered him:

"Yes, Master Jean, it is a great honor that you do us."

"When one invites such good people as you," he said, "one does honor and gives pleasure to himself. And, now, good night."

Then I went out. Never had Master Jean, my godfather, said such good things of my father, and I loved him even more than before, if that were possible.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FEAST AT LEROUX'S

As I entered I said to my parents that father and I were invited to dine to-morrow at Master Jean's, with the notables of Baraques. They understood what a great honor it was, and father was all melted over it. He talked a long time of his drawing at the conscription in the year '57, when Jean Leroux and he went through the city, arm in arm, wearing ribbons in their three-cornered hats. He talked of my baptism, when his old comrade had agreed to be godfather. He recalled all these memories in their slightest detail, and exclaimed, "Ah, the good old time! the good old time!"

Mother also was pleased, but as she was angry with me, instead of showing her pleasure, she continued to spin without saying a word. Nevertheless, on the morrow the white shirts and the best clothes were ready on the table. She had washed and dried and put everything in order at an early hour. When, toward noontime, father and I went down the main street, with our arms linked, she looked at us from the door, and shouted to the neighbors, "They are going to the grand dinner of the notables at Master Jean Leroux's."

Poor old father, leaning on my arm, was saying to me, smilingly:

"We look as fine as on the day of the elections. Since then no harm has befallen us. I hope this will continue,

Michel. But let us keep guard over our tongues. One always talks too much at a grand dinner. Let us take care. Do you hear?"

"Yes, father. Don't worry. I shall not say anything."

He always trembled like a poor hare chased year after year from brush to brush. And how many others were like him! Almost all the old peasants born and bred under the rule of the seigniors and the monasteries, who knew but too well that there was no justice for them. In order to undertake anything young people must make a start with the help of old wiseacres like Chauvel, who never change and who never turn back. If the peasants had begun the Revolution of '89 alone, and if the bourgeois had not helped them, we would still be at '88. Suffering makes one lose courage, confidence grows with happiness, and besides, there was no popular enlightenment then.

But we were to see on that day what good wine could do. We were yet a hundred paces away from the inn when we heard loud bursts of laughter, and the jokes of the notables who had arrived before us. Legrand, Létumier, Cochart, Claude Huré the wheelwright, Gauthier Courtois the old cannoneer, and Master Jean were talking while standing near the end of the big table upon which the white cloth was already spread, and when we came in we were, in a way, dazzled by the decanters, the old decorated china plates, the forks, and the spoons, newly replated, which shone from one end of the great room to the other.

"Hey, here is my old comrade, Jean Bastien!" exclaimed Master Jean, coming to greet us. He wore his

blacksmith's jacket with the hussar's buttons. His wig was twisted and tied, and hung in a coil at the back of his neck. His shirt was open, his round stomach quite filling his breeches. He had woolen stockings, and silver buckled shoes. His big cheeks shone with happiness, and as he put his hands on father's shoulders he said, "Ah, my poor Jean-Pierre! How glad I am to see you! How everything comes back to me when I look at you!"

"Yes," answered father, tears standing in his eyes, "the good times of the conscription. Ah, Jean, I also think of it at times, but it will never come back."

But Létumier, with his three-cornered hat on his ear, his long cinnamon-colored coat hanging on his thin thighs, his red vest with steel buttons, which rang like cymbals, began to shout:

"It has already come back, Jean-Pierre! We have all won at the conscription the day before yesterday. The country has won. Long live joy!" He lifted his hat high up to the ceiling, and the others laughed at the sight of the decanters standing all in a row.

Their hearts beat high for joy. Every one in the group turned around from time to time as if to blow his nose, and counted the bottles out of the corner of his eye. At the end of the room the door to the kitchen stood open, the fire shone red and leaped in the hearth. The two legs of mutton were turning slowly on the spit, the grease falling into the dripping-pan. Dame Catharine, in a big white cap, and the sleeves of her waist rolled up, came and went with a platter or a pie under her apron, and Nicole, with her long iron fork, turned the meats in the pots or shook the salad basket in the corner. The good smells spread everywhere. No one would ever have

Michel. But let us keep guard over our tongues. One always talks too much at a grand dinner. Let us take care. Do you hear?"

"Yes, father. Don't worry. I shall not say anything."

He always trembled like a poor hare chased year after year from brush to brush. And how many others were like him! Almost all the old peasants born and bred under the rule of the seigniors and the monasteries, who knew but too well that there was no justice for them. In order to undertake anything young people must make a start with the help of old wiseacres like Chauvel, who never change and who never turn back. If the peasants had begun the Revolution of '89 alone, and if the bourgeois had not helped them, we would still be at '88. Suffering makes one lose courage, confidence grows with happiness, and besides, there was no popular enlightenment then.

But we were to see on that day what good wine could do. We were yet a hundred paces away from the inn when we heard loud bursts of laughter, and the jokes of the notables who had arrived before us. Legrand, Létumier, Cochart, Claude Huré the wheelwright, Gauthier Courtois the old cannoneer, and Master Jean were talking while standing near the end of the big table upon which the white cloth was already spread, and when we came in we were, in a way, dazzled by the decanters, the old decorated china plates, the forks, and the spoons, newly replated, which shone from one end of the great room to the other.

"Hey, here is my old comrade, Jean Bastien!" exclaimed Master Jean, coming to greet us. He wore his

blacksmith's jacket with the hussar's buttons. His wig was twisted and tied, and hung in a coil at the back of his neck. His shirt was open, his round stomach quite filling his breeches. He had woolen stockings, and silver buckled shoes. His big cheeks shone with happiness, and as he put his hands on father's shoulders he said, "Ah, my poor Jean-Pierre! How glad I am to see you! How everything comes back to me when I look at you!"

"Yes," answered father, tears standing in his eyes, "the good times of the conscription. Ah, Jean, I also think of it at times, but it will never come back."

But Létumier, with his three-cornered hat on his ear, his long cinnamon-colored coat hanging on his thin thighs, his red vest with steel buttons, which rang like cymbals, began to shout:

"It has already come back, Jean-Pierre! We have all won at the conscription the day before yesterday. The country has won. Long live joy!" He lifted his hat high up to the ceiling, and the others laughed at the sight of the decanters standing all in a row.

Their hearts beat high for joy. Every one in the group turned around from time to time as if to blow his nose, and counted the bottles out of the corner of his eye. At the end of the room the door to the kitchen stood open, the fire shone red and leaped in the hearth. The two legs of mutton were turning slowly on the spit, the grease falling into the dripping-pan. Dame Catharine, in a big white cap, and the sleeves of her waist rolled up, came and went with a platter or a pie under her apron, and Nicole, with her long iron fork, turned the meats in the pots or shook the salad basket in the corner. The good smells spread everywhere. No one would ever have

thought that Master Jean would treat the simple notables so well, but this economical, hard-working man never stinted anything on great occasions. And what greater occasion could he have of winning the esteem of the country-side than this of treating right royally those who had elected him from the baillies with his friend Chauvel. All the good bourgeois in my time have done the same. It was the best means of preserving order. They had the good sense to put themselves at the head of the people, and when their sons, through avarice, pride, or stupidity, attempted to separate themselves from their fathers to become mock nobles, they have worked for others smarter than themselves. This is our history in a couple of words.

Meanwhile, the old people gathered near the window, resumed their talk of the affairs of the baillies, and each time that a notable entered, they shouted, "Hey, there, Pletche! Hey, Rigaud! This way, this way! How goes it?"

Valentine stood behind and looked at me laughingly. But his enthusiasm for the king, the queen, and the higher authorities, did not prevent him from loving good wine, sausages, and ham. The thought of such a feast was delightful to him, and he turned his long nose in the direction of the kitchen with complacency.

At noon sharp, at last, Nicole came in to tell me to go and call Chauvel. I was about to go out when he came in leisurely with Marguerite. Every one shouted, "Here he comes! here he comes!"

He, in his Carmagnole jacket and gray breeches, was smiling while shaking each one by the hand. He was no longer the same man. Monsieur, the Lieutenant of Pre-

vost, would not have come to collar him now. He was chosen among the fifteen to go to Metz, and one could see it in his face. His little black eyes shone more than ever, and the snow-white collar of his shirt stood up to his ears. As the big Létumier, who loved pomp, wanted to make a sort of speech in his honor, Chauvel said, laughingly, "Master Létumier, here comes the soup, and it smells very good."

And it was true, for Dame Catharine had just come in with the soup-tureen which she deposited on the table majestically. Master Jean shouted, "Let us sit down, my friends, let us sit down! Létumier, you will make a speech at the dessert. A famished belly has no ears. Here, Cochart. Chauvel, there, at the head of the table! Valentine, Huré, Jean-Pierre!" Then he showed us all to our places, and we all thought of nothing but being happy.

My father, Valentine, and I sat opposite Master Jean, who was serving. He uncovered the big tureen from which the odor of a marrow and bread soup rose in a cloud to the ceiling, and we began to pass our plates. I had never seen such a grand dinner, and was full of admiration, and father still more than I was. "Every one has his bottle near him," said Master Jean, "let him serve himself."

Naturally after the soup the corks were drawn and the glasses filled. Already some one wanted to toast the deputies of the baillies, but it was thin Alsatian wine, and Master Jean cried, "Wait, you must drink our health with good wine, and not with the ordinary kind."

They thought he was right, and the boiled meat with the parsley having been served, each one ate a good slice of it.



Létumier said that every man who worked in the fields or plied his trade ought to have his half pound of beef like that, and his pint of wine at each meal. The forester Cochart approved of the idea, and they began to talk politics when the sauerkraut and broiled sausages came on the table. This diverted the thoughts of all of us.

Marguerite and Nicole ran around the table replacing the empty bottles. Dame Catharine brought in the platters. And when, towards one o'clock, the legs of mutton appeared, and the good old wine of Ribeaupierre was brought, good humor went on increasing. Every one looked around him with a face of contentment, and Cochart was saying, "We are men! We have the rights of men! If any one were to contradict me in the woods, I would answer him. . . . " and the old cannoneer, Gauthier Courtois, was shouting, "If we are not men it is because others have always had for themselves good wine and good food. Before engaging in a war, they were pleased to flatter us and promise us all we wanted. But afterward they talked only of discipline, and the strokes of the flat of the saber rained on us. I say it is a shame to beat the soldiers and prevent those who show courage from becoming officers, simply because they are not nobles."

Létumier saw everything rose colored, "Destitution (*le misère*) is a thing of the past," he exclaimed. "Our memorials are prepared; they will see what we want and the good king will be forced to say, 'These people are right, a thousand times. They want equality of imposts and equality before the law. It is just. Are we not all Frenchmen? Should we not all have the same privileges and pay the same imposts? This stands to reason, the

devil take them!' ” He talked well, opening his big mouth to the ears, and half shutting his eyes with a sly look. His head inclined backward, all the while lifting his arms like people who talk of plenty.

Every one listened, and even father, with two or three nods of the head, murmured, “He speaks well. It is just. But let us not say anything, Michel. It is too dangerous.” He kept watching the door as if he expected the gendarmes to come in at any moment.

Master Jean then filled the glasses with old wine, and cried, “My friends, the good health of our friend Chauvel, the one who has supported us best at the baillies! May he live long to defend the rights of the Third Estate, and may he always speak as well as he has spoken. This is my hearty wish—his good health!” And every one reached round the table and touched glasses, like the happiest of the happy. Each laughed and repeated, “To the health of the deputies of the baillies, Master Jean, and Chauvel!”

The windows of the dining-room fairly rang. In the street people stopped and looked in, thinking, “Those people who are shouting inside must be having a good time.”

The notables had resumed their seats, and the glasses were refilled once more, while Dame Catharine brought in the big cream pies and Marguerite was removing the remainder of the meat, hams, and salad.

All eyes were turned expectantly to Chauvel, to see what he would answer. He sat quietly at the head of the table. His cotton bonnet hung on the arm of his chair, and his face was pale and his lips drawn tight. He seemed to be looking cross-eyed, as he held his glass thoughtfully.

knit jacket and my night cap! Ah, what a good thing it is to get into one's old jacket and old sabots! Hey, is it you, Michel? We have all come back. The sledges will roll along now. You must be behindhand with your work."

"Not very much, Master Jean. We have attended to the most pressing work. The wedges which came from Dagsberg were all sent last night."

"Well, so much the better. So much the better."

Dame Catharine also came full of joy and asked, "Then it is all done, Jean? Everything is done? You will not go there any more?"

"No, Catharine, thank heaven; I have had enough of all these honors at last. Now our affair is bagged. The memorial goes the day after to-morrow. But it was not done without trouble, and if we had not had Chauvel, the Lord only knows where we would still be now. What a man! He knows everything, talks of everything. It is the honor of Baraques to have sent such a man. All those of the other baillies have chosen him among the first to carry our complaints and grievances to Metz, and to defend them against those who might attack them. Never as long as Baraques may last will it cover itself with such honor. Now Chauvel is known everywhere, and they know also that we have sent him, that he lives at Bois-de-Chênes, and that the people of that place had enough good sense to appreciate his intelligence—despite his religion."

Master Jean was saying these things while putting on his sabots and his old jacket. "Yes," he was shouting, while blowing, "of the hundreds of deputies of the baillies the Third Estate has chosen fifteen to carry the memorial. And Chauvel is the fourth. Therefore, now we must

give a fête. Do you understand? We must give a gala feast for the friends of Baraques in honor of our deputy Chauvel. Everything is arranged. Létumier and Cochart already know of it. I met them at the Golden Apple in the city, and I invited them first, while charging them to invite others. The old bottles must be drawn out from under the fagots for this occasion. There must be a good fire in the kitchen. Nicole will go to-night to get six pounds of good beef, three pounds of chops, and two fine legs of mutton at Kountz's place under the market hall. She will say it is for Master Jean Leroux, of the Three Pigeons. The legs of mutton will be prepared with garlic. We must have sausages with cabbage, and we must take down the biggest ham, with a good salad, some cheese, and nuts. Everybody will be happy. I want all the country to know that Baraques has had the honor of sending the fourth deputy of the baillies to Metz, a man whom no one else knew, but whom we have recognized, whom we have chosen, and who alone does more to sustain the rights of the people than fifty others. But we will talk of all this. Chauvel has closed the mouth of the oldest attorneys, of the shrewdest advocates, and of the most high-toned people of the province."

Master Jean must have drank a little too much on the road, for he was talking to himself, while spreading his big hands and swelling out his red cheeks, as he always did at the end of a good dinner. We listened to him in astonishment and admiration.

Nicole began to lay the cloth for supper. This silenced everybody. Each one seemed to be reflecting upon what he had just heard. As I was about to go out, Master Jean said to me: "You will tell your father that he is

The wine of Ribeaupierre seemed to have irritated him, for instead of answering to the toast, by drinking the health of the others, he said, in clear tones, "Yes, the first step is taken. But don't let us sing of victory yet a while. We have much to do still before regaining our rights. To demand the abolition of special privileges, of the land taxes, subsidies, tolls, excises, and corvées is already asking a good deal. The others will not let go so easily what they are holding. No, they will fight. They will stand out against justice. We will have to force them. They will call to their aid all the employees, all those who make a living in those offices, and who are striving to become noble. And, my good friends, this is only the first point. This is but the least of all the things. I think the Third Estate will win this first battle. The people will it, the people who bear all these unjust burdens, will uphold the deputies!"

"Yes, yes, to the bitter end," cried the big Létumier, Cochart, Huré, and Master Jean, clenching their fists. "We will win. We are determined to win!"

Chauvel did not stir. When they were through shouting he continued, as if no one had said anything:

"We can get the better in the matter of all the injustices which the people feel most—these injustices are too crying and too plain; but what good will it do us if, later, when the States General is dissolved, and the money for the debt voted, the nobles should reestablish their rights and privileges? It would not be the first time, for we have had other States General before this. And yet all that they had decided in favor of the people has for a long time ceased to exist. What we must have after securing the abolition of the privileges is the power

to prevent their being reestablished. This power lies in the people and in the army. It is not enough to will a thing one day, one month, or one year. One must always will it, and be on the watch to prevent rogues and rascals from slowly reestablishing, quietly and insidiously, that which the Third Estate, supported by the nation, may have thrown over. The army must be with us, and to have it with us, it must be made possible for the humblest of soldiers to be able to rise by his courage and intelligence from rank to rank, even to the dignity of becoming a marshal or a constable of France, as well as any of the nobles. Do you understand me?"

"Chauvel's health!" cried Gauthier Courtois. But he, stretching out his hand to prevent the others from responding, continued:

"The soldiers then would not be foolish enough to support the nobles against the people. They would be and would remain with us. And, listen to this well, for it is the principal thing: in order that the people and the army might no longer be duped, that they might not be blinded to the point of destroying themselves, their own chances of advancement, and to the point of defending those who occupy the places they ought to fill, we must have free speech and a free press for everybody. If an injustice is done you know to whom you can go for redress. To a superior? The superior always puts you in the wrong. It is simple—the employee carries out his orders. But, if you could make a complaint before the people, supposing that the people nominated the superiors, then no one would dare do you an injustice, and even none could exist, because you could bring your servants to order by depriving them of your vote. But people must

be educated to understand these things. That is why enlightenment seems such a dangerous thing to the nobles. That is why they preach to you 'Blessed are the poor in spirit!' That is why we have laws against books and papers, and those who crave light must go to Switzerland, Holland, or England. Some have died in the effort. But no, such men never die. They are always in the midst of the people to strengthen them. Only they must be read, they must be understood. It is their health that I drink!" Then only did Chauvel hold out his glass to us, and we all cried together, "To the health of all these good people!" Many of us did not know of whom he was speaking, but we shouted all the same, and so loudly that at last Dame Catharine came to tell us not to shout so much, that half the village was gathered outside the window, and that it might seem that we were rebelling against the king. Valentine went out and father began to look at me as if to ask if it was not time to run away.

"There, that is all right, Catharine," answered Master Jean; "we have said what we had to say, and for the present it is enough."

Every one became silent, and a basket of apples and nuts was passed around. Outside in the street we heard the sound of a wheezy hurdy-gurdy. "Hey, there," said Létumier, "here is Methuselah," and Master Jean cried, "Let him come in. That is good. He comes just in time."

Marguerite went out and brought Methuselah, whom everybody in the country knew. His real name was Dominique Saint-Fauvert, and the oldest people will tell you that they never saw such an old man still on his feet.

He must have been nearly a hundred years old. His face was so yellow and so wrinkled that it looked like gingerbread, and one could hardly see the shape of his nose or chin; and small eyes, so overgrown with bushy white eyebrows that they looked like a poodle's. He wore a great gray felt hat creased in the middle, and turned straight up in front like a visor, adorned with a cock feather. The sleeves of his coat, as well as his breeches, were split through their length and laced to look like tights. The tunes he was playing must have dated back to the times of the Swedes, and they were sad enough to make one weep.

"Hey, is it you, Methuselah?" cried Master Jean. "Come in, come in!" He handed him a large glass of wine, which old Dominique took, bowing in three directions by a nod of his head. After this he drank slowly, closing his small eyes. Dame Catharine, Marguerite, and Nicole stood in the background watching, and we looked upon him with emotion.

Master Jean, after he had taken the glass from the old man, asked him to sing something. But old Methuselah answered that he had not sung for years, and as we were in a softened mood, he began to play an air, so sweet and old that no one seemed to know it. Each one looked at the other. Suddenly father said, "Ah, this is the air of the peasants," and every one at the table cried, "Yes, yes, this is the air of the peasants and Jean-Pierre is going to sing it."

I did not know that my father sang. I had never heard him. He said, "I have forgotten how. I do not remember the first word of it!" But as Chauvel urged him, and Master Jean declared that no one used to sing



better than his friend Jean-Pierre, at last, with downcast eyes and flaming cheeks, he coughed discreetly and said, "If you really wish me to, I will try to remember it."

At once he began to sing the air of the peasants to the accompaniment of the hurdy-gurdy, but in a voice so sweet and sad that one could almost see our old ancestors scratching the soil with plows to which their wives were harnessed, pillaging soldiers coming to steal their crops, fire breaking out in the straw villages, and sending up the harvest in smoke, women and girls dragged away into unfrequented paths, famine, sickness, wholesale hangings, and all the miseries. . . . The song dragged and dragged without end. At the third verse, in spite of the effect of the good wine, I laid my head on the table and sobbed, while Létumier, Huré, Cochart, Master Jean, and two or three others joined in the refrain as if they were singing at the funeral of their fathers and mothers. Marguerite sang also, her voice rising like the wail of a harnessed or wronged woman. It was terrible. The very hair stood up on one's head.

I looked around me and saw that we were all deathly pale. Chauvel, at the end of the table, his lips tightly drawn, looked at us like a wolf. At last father became silent. The old hurdy-gurdy still rasped on, and Chauvel said:

"Jean-Pierre, you have sung well! You have sung like one of our forefathers because you have felt the same thing. And our fathers and grandfathers and all those men and women from whom we are descended years back have felt them." Then, as we all remained silent, he cried, "The old song is done. It is time for another to begin." With one accord all those present were on their

feet, I among the first, and were shouting, "Yes, another song must begin. We have suffered too much."

"This is to be seen soon," said Chauvel. "At present Dame Catharine has told us not to make so much noise. And besides, it serves no purpose here."

Master Jean then began in a big voice the song of the blacksmith. Valentine having reëntered, we joined in together, and it made us feel a little better. It was also a sad song, but it was strong, and the refrain said the blacksmith forges iron. This could be understood in a number of ways, and it made us smile hopefully.

In those days many other songs were sung, and good ones, too, but I shall never forget the one sung by my father, and when I think of it I exclaim, even to-day: "Oh great, oh holy Revolution! Let the French peasant who might be capable of renouncing thee learn the song of his ancestors, and if that song does not convert him, let him, his children, and their descendants sing it once more over the soil. Perhaps they might understand it then, and their ingratitude would find its reward."

On that day father and I returned late to the hut, and the following day, the 10th of April, 1789, Chauvel left for Metz. The States General was no longer far off.

## CHAPTER XV

### MARGUERITE'S COURAGE

During the few days following Chauvel's departure, nothing was spoken of but the affairs of the grand bailies,\* and principally of the gathering of the three orders in one at the States General. This was another one of the greatest disputes I ever witnessed in my life. As the ordinance of the king had declared that the Third Estate should be doubled, that is to say, that we would have as many deputies as the two orders which were united, we wished to vote by individual, to abolish the privileges, in spite of all that the nobles and bishops could say; but they, who wished to preserve their ancient rights, wished to vote by class, because they were always sure of being together against us, and of having two votes to our one.

Then one should have seen the indignation of Master Jean, of Létumier, of Cochart, and of all the notables gathered in the evening in the courtyard of the Three Pigeons, under the great oak. Several days before this we had taken the benches and tables outside, in the evening, to breathe the fine air. Although we should have had wind and rain in May, 1789, the heat of April had been

\*In France, at the time of the Revolution, the royal *baillis* were commanders of the troops, administrators of the royal domains, and judges, each one in his district. Proprietors of estates, also, possessing supreme jurisdiction, appointed *baillis* to superintend their courts of justice. As very little knowledge was required for these situations, and as they might be purchased, they were held in little estimation; and, in later times, the *baillis* became standing characters on the stage, held up to ridicule on account of their ignorance and their absurd pretensions, as well as for cheating and injustice. The authors of "The States General" occasionally use the term to designate the district as well as the official who administered it.


great. Everything was green and flourishing. The birds had begun to nest as early as the 15th, and I remember that we worked at the forge, Valentine and I, in simple blouses, our trousers hanging down over our hips, and our shirts hung up behind the door. Master Jean, red in the face and glowing with health, continually called to me from outside, "Michell! Hey, there, Michel, come here!" And then I would have to pump two or three dashes of cold water over his bald head and shoulders. It was his manner of cooling himself. Madeleine, the wife of the turner who lived opposite, watched us laughing heartily. This will let you know that it was very hot, and that after eight o'clock, when the moon had risen, one was glad to go out into the fresh air, and empty his bottle or his pot of cider, in the courtyard behind the trellis.

All along the street, in front of their doors, the women and girls were spinning, having a good time. One heard talking and laughing far and near. Dogs were barking also, and the neighbors could hear us in hot discussion. But we did not care. We were beginning to feel confident. Marguerite came sometimes, and we would chat under the elm trees, laughing to ourselves while the big Létumier pounded the table with his fists, shouting, "It is done! It cannot last longer. We must declare that we are everything!" And Dame Catharine would say, "In the name of heaven, Master Létumier, don't break the table. It does not want to vote by order."

Matters were going on in this way. I do not remember ever having been happier than at that time, when I talked to Marguerite without ever daring to tell her I loved her. No, I have never had greater happiness.

That evening, about eight o'clock, we were in the courtyard, some lounging behind others, and the moon above the trees. The big Létumier was shouting, and Cochart, his hooked nose sunk in his beard, the short end of a pipe between his teeth, and round eyes like an owl, was smoking with his elbows spread out over the table. One no longer mistrusted anything, Cochart no more than the rest, though he had made a grand stroke that day. The wood-cutting trade did not pay him very much, as one may well suppose. But from time to time he would get over the boundary, and get at Graufthal a bag of tobacco which he sold at a good profit in the neighborhood, the fine red tobacco at four cents a pound instead of twenty, and the fine black at three cents instead of fifteen.

The disputes over politics were evidently to be continued until eight o'clock, as they ordinarily did, when the trellis from the street suddenly opened, and one of the bourgeois men with two sergeants of the gendarmerie came slowly into the courtyard, and regarded us. It was fat Mathurin Poulet, the cellarer of the gate of Germany, with his little three-cornered cap pushed back on his neck, his old yellow wig twisted up like a sausage underneath, his big red nose in the air, his ox-like eyes glittering in the moonlight, his double chin in the folds of his shirt, and his stomach hanging over his thighs—in a word, a terrible glutton. He had to have six Bologna sausages cut up in a large salad dish with string beans and oil, a little loaf of bread, three pounds in weight, and two pots of beer for his breakfast; and for his dinner some fine slices of ham or a leg of mutton and more, and two white cheeses with chives. One can imagine, after that,



whether the income of a cellarer was sufficient for his living. Moreover, Poulet knew neither father nor mother, brother nor sister, nor cousin, when he was working to fill his salad dish. He would have denounced the good God to gain a bonus, and in spite of his stupid appearance, he was as keen as a fox in ferreting out frauds and in pursuing smugglers. He dreamed of his bounty by day and by night, and lived by means of his exposures, as others did by their labor. That's what it is to have a stomach like his to feed. The heart itself degenerates into a sort of stomach, and one thinks of nothing but to eat and to drink.

The two sergeants who followed him were dressed like all the visiting sergeants, in white jackets with yellow revers, which gave them the name of "Slices of Bacon," with hats set the way of the shoulders, and sabers hitting against their big calves. They were men of six feet six, but all deeply pock-marked. Before the Revolution nearly everybody was pock-marked. Beautiful women ran the risk of losing their beauty, and handsome men also. There were many one-eyed and blind people on account of this terrible malady. God only knows what trouble it was to make them take medicine, perhaps even more than we had with the potatoes. The people always began by rejecting that which was for their good. What a misfortune!

These fellows came in, and the big Poulet, when within about four paces of the table, seeing Cochart, said, with an air of satisfaction, "There! We have him."

There was general indignation in the courtyard, for Cochart had brought Poulet tobacco without charge for a long time. But Poulet did not let such a small matter as

this cause him any uneasiness. He said to the sergeants, "Seize him! It is he."

The other two seized Cochart, and he, as he dropped his pipe, cried out, "What do you want of me? What have I done?"

The sparks dropped at our feet. We looked at one another in amazement, and Poulet answered him, smilingly:

"We have come for the two bags of contraband that you brought yesterday from Graufthal. You know what I mean, the two bags of tobacco which are at the right of the entrance to your barn, behind the chimney, under the woodpile."

Then we understood that poor Cochart had been denounced by some envious neighbor, and each of us trembled, for it was a case for the galleys. We scarcely dared to stir, for to resist the treasury was even more terrible in those days than it is to-day. They took from you not only land, money, house, but if there happened to be a need for rowers at Marseilles or at Dunkerque, you were sent there, and no one ever heard you spoken of afterward. This happened several times in the mountain country, and even in Baraques to the son of old Geneviève Paquette. Through the denunciation of Poulet he was convicted of having smuggled salt, and afterward the people said that François was in the land where pepper grew. Geneviève lost all her property in paying the fines and charges. She became infirm and a beggar. So our terror now can be imagined.

"Come on!" cried Poulet, "let us go!"

Cochart, clinging to the table, answered, puffingly, "I will not go."

The big Létumier had no inclination to shout; he kept

as quiet as a carp in his trough. All these great brawlers, when they saw the sergeants and the gendarmes, became prudent, and often those of whom the least was thought showed the most courage.

By pulling and shaking him, the two sergeants had almost succeeded in dragging Cochart from his bench. Poulet said, "One more pull! That will do it."

Then Marguerite, who was seated near me, close to the trellis, raised her voice in the midst of the silence: "Monsieur Poulet," she said, "be careful! You have no right to arrest this man."

Every one of us about the table and at the door, Master Jean Leroux, Létumier, Dame Catharine, Nicole, all pale with fear and pity, turned around in terror. They had recognized Marguerite's voice, but they could not understand her courage; they trembled at it. The big Poulet, his nose in the air like the rest, looked at her in surprise. Never had such a thing happened before.

"Who dares to speak," he shouted. "Who permits himself to protest against the excise officer?"

Marguerite replied, calmly, from her seat, "It is I, Monsieur Poulet, Marguerite Chauvel, the daughter of Chauvel the deputy of the Third Estate to the grand baillie at Metz. What you are doing is very wrong. It is serious, Monsieur Cellarer, to arrest a noble, a notable, without the express order of Monsieur the Prevost." And, rising, she approached the cellarer and the two sergeants, who turned about and looked at her from under their great hats without, however, releasing Cochart.

"Don't you know the king's ordinance?" she asked him. "You are arresting people for matters which concern the treasury after six o'clock in the evening, which



is forbidden by the ordinance, and you want to force them to open their doors to you in the night. Consider that all sorts of criminals could say, 'We are employees of the treasury! Open!' They would rob our villages at their pleasure if the ordinance did not prohibit just what you are doing, and if the law did not prescribe that you must be accompanied by two aldermen and act in full daylight."

She spoke clearly and frankly, as did the old man Chauvel, and Poulet seemed quite confused to see her dare to talk openly to his face. Indignation made his very cheeks tremble. But everybody else plucked up courage. Outside, in the street, a murmur was heard while Marguerite was speaking, and when she had finished, a plaintive voice of lamentation was raised, the voice of old Geneviève Paquette, crying, "Ah, the robber! Ah, the wretch! He has come again! He must have the children and the fathers of families!" The poor old woman lifted her crutch over the hedge, and her cries came like sobs. She kept saying: "It is you who took my boy from me, my poor François! It is you who have made me destitute! Ah, the good God will repay you! He will give you your due! This is not the end of all! The unfortunates will get their due!"

Even listening to her made one's flesh creep, and we all became pale. As for Poulet himself, he just stared, listening to the murmur from the street. The sergeants also turned around. At that moment Master Jean stood up and said:

"Monsieur Cellarer, listen to that unfortunate woman! It is terrible! No one here would be willing to have such a thing on his conscience. It breaks one's heart!"

Geneviève Paquette cried no more, but she groaned,

and one could hear her crutches going slowly up the street.

"Yes," said Master Jean, "it is horrible. Consider well what you are doing. We are living in a moment most difficult for us all, but principally for the employees of the treasury. The vessel is full; take care how you make it run over. This is the fifth time already this year that you have come at night after everything has been closed up, and last winter you made visits to Lutzelbourg after midnight, searching for contraband. If the people permitted themselves to resist you, what would we do, we good bourgeois? Ought we to oppose you by main force, because you are violating the ordinance of the king? Are we to sustain those who trample the edict under their feet, or uphold those who defend their rights? Consider, in the name of heaven! I have only this to say to you, Monsieur Poulet!" Then he took his seat.

The murmur in the street increased. A number of people leaned over the hedge to see and to hear. Cochart shouted, "I will not go! You will kill me first! I am with the ordinance!"

Poulet, seeing that the two sergeants themselves were beginning to consider and to look around without daring to follow out his orders, suddenly remembered Marguerite and turned about in a fury, crying to her, "This is your doing . . . . you Calvinist! Everything would have gone on as usual except for that worthless race!"

He stepped forward, red in the face, and his neck all flushed with blood like one of those big turkeys which run after the children. He went forward to push her, when he saw me just behind her in the shadow. I don't know how I came there in my shirt sleeves, but I was looking

at him and laughing to myself as I thought, "Wretch! if you touch her, I pity you!" I could fairly feel his great red neck between my two hands, as in a vise. He saw this himself, and all at once became quite pale.

"Well," he said, "all right, all right! We will come back to-morrow."

The two sergeants who saw the crowd leaning over the hedge, and all the eyes gleaming in the shadow, seemed very glad to go off. They let Cochart go. He smoothed out his clothes, though his smock frock was torn and his cheeks and forehead covered with perspiration. As for me, I did not stir from my place.

Then Marguerite turned and saw me. Many of the others also saw and looked at me. I was, one might say, sorry to see the big cellarer go out with his sergeants. That evening I would have enjoyed a fight. How wonderful men are, and how ideas change with age! But one cannot always have the arms and shoulders of eighteen years and the hands of a blacksmith! Then one does not think of more than to show his power before one he loves.

Well, they went off and Marguerite said to me, with a smile, "They have gone, Michel!" And I said, "It is the best idea they could have."

But scarcely were they outside than whistling and laughter echoed from one end of Baraques to the other. Cochart was still in dismay, and his blockhead devoid of any idea. Marguerite said to him, "Hurry, take your contraband into the woods! Hurry!"

Ah, how happy she seemed, and poor Cochart, how overjoyed he was! I am sure he wanted to thank her, but the horror of it all still held him. He left and ran up the road, without even saying good night.

Every one shouted and sang of victory in his heart. Poulet and the two sergeants who were now going across the fields must have heard us from a distance, even as far as the little pathway of the cemetery near the city. They must have been annoyed by the failure of their scheme, the rogues!

Master Jean brought out the cider, and for a long time we sat about the table and talked over what had happened. Each one wished to have said his say, those who had not boasted like the others, but all recognized the courage and good sense of Marguerite. Master Jean said:

"The spirit of her father is in her. It certainly made one laugh to see her manner of addressing these treasury fellows, and the way in which she forced them to let Cochart go. That will make him feel good."

I listened in silence, as I sat near Marguerite. I was the happiest lad in the country. And much later, after ten o'clock, as one and then the other was leaving, and Master Jean was closing the door, and shouting "Good night, my friends, good night! Ah, what a fine day!" and as the company went out in threes and fours, to the right and to the left, Marguerite and I, the last to leave, went out together into the courtyard, and pushing back the trellis, we climbed slowly up the village street.

We were very thoughtful, and looked out upon that fair night, with the trees throwing their great long shadows along the road, and the innumerable stars overhead. The deep silence returned, and not a leaf murmured in the air. In the distance, doors and shutters were being closed. Some old people were wishing one another good night, and before the house of Chauvel, from under the hedge surrounding the little orchard on the slope, the little

spring trickled forth from its old pipe and splashed into the little channel on the bare earth beneath.

I can see the water now as it flowed pure from the spout, the cress on the fountain, and the iris which hung down quite covering the rotten old spout; the shade of the great apple tree at the corner of the house, and in the little pool, the moon trembling as in the depths of a mirror. Everything was hushed. Marguerite gazed at it all for an instant, and then said, "How quiet everything is, Michell!"

Then she leaned over, with her little hand on the mouth of the stream, her beautiful black hair falling over her cheeks and her pretty brown neck. She drank. As for me, I looked at her enraptured. Suddenly she rose and wiped her chin on her apron, saying to me:

"It's all the same, Michel, you are the bravest of all the boys of the village. I saw you behind me. You did not have a cheerful face, oh, no! And Poulet made haste to leave when he saw you!" She began to laugh, and as I rejoiced to hear her there in that quiet road, she asked, "But, tell me, now! What were you thinking of, Michel, to have such a face?" And I answered, "I was thinking that if he was unlucky enough to touch you, or to say only one insulting word, he would have been a lost man."

She looked at me and her cheeks grew red. "But you would have been sent to the galleys."

"How would that have hurt me? It would have been after I had killed him."

How all this comes back to me after many years! I hear Marguerite's voice. Her every word is in my ear, and the little murmur of the spring—all comes back. Oh,

love, what a beautiful thing thou art! Marguerite was then sixteen, but she has never grown any older to me.

We remained for a few moments longer to dream, and then Marguerite went to the door of their house. She said nothing more. But as she was opening the door, with her foot already at the entrance, she turned around suddenly, and stretched out her hand to me from a distance, and with her two eyes sparkling, said, "Well, well, good night, Michel! Sleep well, and thank you!" And I felt that she squeezed my hand. How it stirred me!

As the door was being closed, I remained for two minutes where I stood, listening to Marguerite as she stepped about in their hut, and mounted the stairs. Then, as I watched her light the lamp; through the bars of the shutters, I said to myself, "She is going to sleep!"

Then I left, crying in my spirit, "Now she knows that you love her." Never since have I felt emotion and enthusiasm equal to that moment.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MARGUERITE'S TRIUMPH

I had decided that Marguerite was to be my wife. Everything was arranged in my head, and I said to myself: "She is still too young. But in fifteen months she will be eighteen years old, and will then understand that her happiness lies in marriage, like all the rest of the girls. I will tell her that I love her. We will soon come to an understanding. Then the trouble will begin. Mother will scream terribly. She will not want a Calvinist, and the curé and all the people of the village will side with her. But that will make no difference. Father will always be with me, for I will show him that this will be the happiness of all my life, and that I cannot exist without Marguerite. Then he will have courage, and despite everything, the matter must be arranged. After that we will rent a little forge on the road to Quatre-Vents, at the Roulette, or on the road to Mittelbronn, at the Maison-Rouge, and we will work for ourselves. The carters and wagoners are plentiful. Perhaps we may be able to keep a little inn like Master Jean. We will be the happiest people in the world, and if we have the happiness of a little child, at the end of a fortnight or three weeks I will take him in my arms and go quietly to Baraques, and will say to mother, 'Here he is! Curse him!' and she will cry, she will scream. Then she will become quiet, and finally she will come to see us, and all will be fixed up."

This is what I thought while tears filled my eyes. I also thought that Père Chauvel would be glad to have me for a son-in-law. What better could he hope for than a good workman, industrious, saving, and capable of gaining a competence by his labor, a man plain and honest like myself! I was, so to say, sure that he would consent. Nothing troubled me, everything seemed so sensible, and I was overcome by my excellent ideas. Unfortunately, things come into the world for which one is not at all prepared.

One morning, five or six days after the visit of the treasury officials, we were shoeing the roan of the old Jew Schmoûle before the forge, when the Steffen woman came from Baraques heights. She had just returned from the city market, where she had been selling eggs and vegetables, and she said to Master Jean, "Here is something for you!" It was a letter from Metz, and Master Jean cried joyfully: "I'll wager it's from Chauvel. Read us this, Michel, for I have no time to look for my glasses."

I opened the letter, but hardly had I read two or three lines than my knees shook under me, and a cold chill passed over me. Chauvel announced to Master Jean that he had been nominated deputy of the Third Estate to the States General, and asked him to send Marguerite immediately to the inn of the Plat-d'Étain, on Vieilles-Bougeries Street, in Metz, for they were to go together to Versailles.

That is all I remember of the letter, which was quite long. The rest I read without understanding. Finally I sat down on the anvil like one stricken. Master Jean crossed the street, shouting, "Catharine, Chauvel has



been nominated deputy of the Third Estate to the States General!" Valentine, with his hands piously crossed, murmured, "Chauvel, at court among the lords and bishops, oh my God!" and the old Jew Schmoûle answered him, "He is a man of good sense, a real business man. He is as worthy of the place as any other." But I, with misty eyes, cried within myself, "Now all is ended, all is lost. Marguerite is going away, and I shall be left alone." I felt like sobbing. Shame alone held me back, and I thought: "If anybody knew that you love her, the whole country would mock at you. What is a blacksmith's boy beside the daughter of a deputy of the Third Estate? Nothing at all. Marguerite is in heaven while you are on earth." And my heart was torn to pieces.

The street was filling with people. Dame Catharine, Nicole, Master Jean, the neighbors, and their wives were crying, "Chauvel is deputy of the Third Estate to the States General."

There was a great stir; Master Jean returned to the forge, exclaiming, "We have all lost our heads because of the honor to the country. We can't think of anything. Michel, run and tell Marguerite." Then I rose. I feared to see Marguerite. I was afraid I would weep before her, and in spite of myself, declare my love for her and embarrass her. Even while in the lane I had to stop to strengthen my heart. Then I entered.

Marguerite was in the little room ironing clothes. "Oh," she said, "it is Michel." She seemed astonished to see me in my shirt sleeves, for I had not thought to put on my jacket or to wash my hands. I said to her, "Yes, it is I. I am bringing you good news."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Your father has been nominated deputy of the Third Estate to the States General." As I spoke she became very pale, and I cried, "Marguerite, what is the matter with you?" But she could not answer me. It was joy and pride which was the cause of it. Suddenly melting into tears she threw herself into my arms, crying, "Oh, Michel, what honor for my father!"

I held her tight, and she, with her arms around my neck, kept sobbing so that I felt her little frame shake, and her tears were raining on my cheeks. Ah, how I loved her! And how I wished I could keep her! And how I cried in my soul: "Let any one come to take her away from me!" And yet I had to let her go, her father was the master.

Marguerite cried a long time. Then, loosening her arms, she ran to wipe her face on the towel and began laughing. She said to me, "I am surely mad, Michel. How can one cry for such things?" But I did not answer, and looked at her with more love than one could imagine, while she paid no attention. "Come," she said, taking me by the arm, "let us go!" And we went out.

The big dining-room of the Three Pigeons was full of people, but I have no desire to tell you how Master Jean kissed her and Dame Catharine and Nicole, nor about the compliments of the notables, the big Létumier, old Rigaud, and Huré. That day the inn was filled with the people of Baraques until nine o'clock. Men, women, and children kept going in and out, tossing up their hats and bonnets, stumbling and shouting, and making noise enough to be heard in little Saint-Jean. The glasses, bottles, and canettes were ringing, Master Jean's big voice dominating

the tumult with loud bursts of laughter. I, looking upon all this, said to myself, "You are but a beggar anyway. The whole village is rejoicing at the happiness of Chauvel and Marguerite. Everybody is delighted, while you remain sad enough to die. It's outrageous!" Valentine was the only one who felt like me, and said, "This is the tearing up of everything. Now the rabble goes to the court. The seigniors are confounded with barefoot beggars. Nothing is respected. Calvinists are nominated instead of Christians. The end of the world is coming."

In my great grief I thought he was right. My courage was failing me. I could no longer stay in the crowd. Marguerite herself had been forced to retreat to the kitchen. But the notables came in even there to pay their respects to her. I took my cap and went out. I went God knows where—straight ahead toward the big highway across the fields.

The weather had been beautiful for the last fifteen days. The oats were quite green, and the other grain was growing. Along the way, in the hedges, the skylarks warbled, and in the air the swallows were hovering with their never-ending music and joy. Neither the sun nor the moon stopped because of me, and my desolation was terrible.

I sat down three or four times on the edge of the road, in the shadow of a hedge, with my head buried in my hands, and dreamed. And the more I dreamed the greater grew my sadness. I saw nothing before me nor behind me—just like the stories that are told of unfortunate shipwrecked people who can see nothing but water and sky, and who cry out, "No more hope! Now we must die!" So I thought, and nothing else mattered to me.

At last, as night closed in, without knowing just how, I returned to the village and came to our hut. Afar off, at the end of the street, the songs could still be heard. I listened and thought, "Sing and shout to your hearts' content. Life is but misery!"


I went in. Father and mother were sitting on their little stools, the one spinning, the other weaving a basket. Father looked at me, and cried, "How pale you are, Michel! You are ill, my child!"

I did not know what to reply, when mother said, with a smile, "Don't you see that he has drunk with the others? He took his full share in honor of Chauvel!"

In the bitterness of my soul I answered, "Yes, you are right, mother. I am ill. I have drunk too much. You are right. One should make the best of a good occasion."

Then father said, kindly, "Well, my child, go and sleep. It will pass. Good night, Michel!"

I took the little tin lamp and began to climb the ladder heavily, resting my hand on my knee to help myself up. When I reached the top I put the lamp on the floor and looked for a few moments at my little brother Étienne. He was sleeping soundly, with his fair head thrown back on the coarse linen pillow, his small mouth open, and his long hair matted around his neck. I thought, "How much he looks like father! How he resembles him! My God!" And I kissed him, weeping softly, and saying, "Well, it is for you that I shall labor now. Since everything is leaving me, since nothing more is left me, it is for you that I shall work. Perhaps you will be happier. The one you will love will perhaps not leave you. And we will all live together."



Then I undressed and lay myself beside him all night. I dreamed of my misfortune, repeating to myself that I needed courage, that no one must know of my love for Marguerite, that it would be a shame, that a man must be a man, and so on. Early in the morning I returned quietly to the forge, resolved to remain firm. It did me some good.

On that day the compliments continued, and they came not only from the people of Baraques, but from the notables of the city as well, from the officers of the city hall, the aldermen, the assessors, the secretaries, the treasurers, the receivers, the controllers, the notaries, and goodness knows who else besides. All this crowd of people whom we did not know from Adam or Eve came, one after another, with their three-cornered hats, their big powdered wigs, their long, ivory-handled canes, their ratteen coats, their silk stockings, their jabots, and laces. They came like swallows about a belfry in autumn, to pay their respects to Mademoiselle Marguerite Chauvel, the daughter of our deputy to the States General. They seemed overjoyed, as if our election concerned them. What an abomination! The inn and its neighborhood was full of the sweet odors of musk and vanilla. I have often thought since that they were the real cuckoos, invading the nests of other birds, but never bringing a single bit of straw to build with. Their business was to profit by everything without giving themselves any trouble, and to slip into good places, by dint of doffing their hats at the right moment. Before the election they would not have said either "Good morning" or "Good evening" to us, but now they came to offer their services, knowing well that Chauvel at Versailles could render them double

and three-fold service. Ah, the beggars! The very sight of them made my blood boil.

While Master Jean, Marguerite, and Dame Catharine were receiving all these fine people, Valentine and I from the forge opposite observed all their grimaces through the open window, and Valentine, yellow with indignation, was saying, "Just see! Here is the Syndic So-and-So, or Secretary So-and-So, bowing. Look at his face, and his fine manner of bowing! Now he is taking his little pinch of Maccaboy on his thumb. He lets it fall from the tips of his fingers onto his jabot. He has learned this at Monsignor the Cardinal's. But it serves just as well in a tavern. It is flattering to the daughter of Monsieur the Deputy Chauvel. Now he is turning on his heel, and is going to bow to the rest of the company." Valentine was laughing, and I pounded the anvil without looking. Anger was stifling me. It was then that I realized more than ever before the distance separating Marguerite from me. The people of Baraques might have made a mistake concerning the greatness of a deputy of the Third Estate to the States General, but these people knew what they were about. They did not lavish their compliments and bows for nothing. Marguerite had but to choose. And as I thought of it, it would have been wrong for her to accept a blacksmith when she might have the son of some councilor or syndic. Yes, it seemed entirely natural that she should do so, and this thought filled me with the greatest desolation. And I had to look upon the spectacle until five o'clock in the evening.

Marguerite was to go at night by the Paris courier. Master Jean offered to loan her his trunk. It was a big trunk, covered with cowhide, which he had inherited from

his father-in-law. It had been standing around in the garret for the last thirty years. I had been given the task of putting on metal corners and of strengthening it generally. All day long my mind was full of the thought of smashing it with one stroke of my hammer. This thought came twenty times. But then I reflected that I was working for Marguerite, and that this was probably the last service I would be able to render her. Great tears filled my eyes as I worked on with a love that one does not experience after twenty. It never seemed done. There was always something more to file, another hinge to adjust better. However, by a few moments before five, I could find nothing else to do on it. The lock worked easily, the padlock closed almost of its own accord—everything was solid. Marguerite had just come out, and I saw her enter their house. I told Valentine that I was tired, and that I would be grateful to him if he would carry the trunk to the Chauvels. He put it on his shoulder and went off immediately. I, in my state of mind, would not have dared to go there, to find myself once more alone with Marguerite. I felt that I would give way to my despair. I put on my jacket and entered the inn. All the others had gone out, thank goodness!

Master Jean, with shining eyes and red cheeks, was celebrating the honor which had been done to the Three Pigeons. While puffing out his cheeks, he said that never had an inn received such honor, and Dame Catharine thought the same.

Nicole was setting the table. Master Jean then seeing me, said that Marguerite had already eaten her supper, and that she was now making haste to pack her things and the books her father had wished her to bring. He

asked me about the trunk. I told him that it was finished, and that Valentine had carried it to the Chauvels. At that moment Valentine entered, and we sat down to supper.

• I had thought of going home at eight o'clock without saying a word to any one. Of what use were all these compliments since everything was over, since there was no other resource for me? Besides, I thought to myself, "Well, when she is gone, Master Jean will write to Chauvel that I was ill; that is, if he should worry about it, and if he shouldn't, so much the better."

This was my plan. So, right after supper, I rose and went out. It was dark, and in the upper room of Chauvel's house a light shone. I paused for a moment or two and looked up, but suddenly seeing Marguerite approaching the window, I started to run. At the moment I turned the corner of the orchard I heard her call, "Michell! Michell!" I stopped as though the chimney had fallen on my head. "What do you want Marguerite?" I asked her, feeling my heart beating hard enough to burst my chest.

"Come up," she answered; "I was going to look for you. I want to speak to you."

Then I went up pale as a ghost. I found her in the room upstairs. The wardrobe stood open, and she had just packed her trunk. She said with a smile, "You see I have made haste. The books are at the bottom, the linen on top of them, and on the very top my dresses. I am looking around to see if there is not something else to go in," and, as I did not answer, being too troubled to speak, she continued: "Listen! Now I must show you the house, for it is you who will take care of it. Come!"



She took me by the hand, and we entered the little back room above the kitchen. This was the fruit store-room, but there was no fruit, only the shelves for it.

"See!" she said, "here you will put the apples and pears from the orchard. We haven't very many of them—the more reason we should take pains to keep them."

"Yes, Marguerite," I answered, looking at her with emotion. Then we went downstairs and she showed me her father's bedroom, their little cellar, and the kitchen opening into the orchard. Then she asked me to take especial care of her rose bushes, saying that was the main thing, and that she would feel very badly if I did not take good care of them. I thought to myself, "They will be well taken care of, but to what purpose, since you are going away?" Yet, into my heart I felt a sort of hope steal softly. My eyes were dimmed, and as I saw myself there, alone with her, speaking to her, I cried within myself, "Oh, God! Oh, God! is it possible that this can be the end of everything?"

As we reëntered the lower room Marguerite showed me her father's books, ranged neatly on their shelves between the two little windows, and said: "While we are away, you will come often to get books, Michel, and you will read them. You must instruct yourself, for without knowledge one is nothing."

I listened to her without replying, being deeply touched by the thought that she concerned herself about my education. This was one of the things I also considered of the first importance, and I thought, "She loves me. Yes, she loves me. Oh, we could have been so happy!"

After putting the lamp on the table she gave me the

key of the house, telling me to open the windows from time to time to air it.

"When we return, Michel, I hope everything will be in good order," she said, as we were about to go out. Hearing that they might return, I exclaimed, "Then you will come back, Marguerite? You are not going away forever?" My voice trembled, and I was almost beside myself.

"What do you mean," she asked, looking at me with wide-open eyes, "by asking if we will return? What else do you expect us to do, you big baby? Do you imagine we are going to make a fortune there?" and she laughed. "Of course we will return, and poorer than we went, never fear. We will return to ply our trade when the rights of the people have been voted for. We may return this year, or the next at the latest."

"Ah," I exclaimed. "I thought you would not come back," and then, no longer able to contain myself, I began to sob like a child. I sat down on the trunk, bowed my head in my hands, thanking God, and yet ashamed of having spoken. Marguerite said nothing. This lasted a few moments, for I could not stop. Suddenly I felt her hand on my shoulder. I arose. She was pale and her beautiful black eyes were shining. "Work hard, Michel," she said to me, gently, pointing to the little library, "and my father will love you." Then she took the lamp and went out. I lifted the trunk on my shoulder as though it had been a feather, and followed her down the path. I wanted to speak, but did not know what to say. I closed the door and put the key in my pocket. The moon shone amid myriads of stars. Then I exclaimed, as I looked upward, "Ah, what a lovely

night, Marguerite! I thank God for having given you such a beautiful night for your departure. Traveling will be pleasant." My heart had become light again. She seemed more grave, and as we entered the inn she said, "Do not forget what you have promised me!"

The courier was due at ten o'clock. There was just time enough to make the last preparation. Everybody kissed Marguerite excepting Master Jean and me, who were to see her off in the city. A few moments later we started down the road, bathed in the beautiful moonlight. Dame Catharine and Nicole stood at the door crying, "Bon voyage, Marguerite! Come back soon!"

"Yes," she answered, "and may I find you all in good health!"

I had shouldered the trunk again, and we took the road edged with poplars that led to the fortifications. Marguerite walked beside me, and said two or three times, "The trunk is heavy, isn't it, Michel?" I answered, "No, Marguerite, it is nothing."

The time was short, and we hastened our steps. When we reached the foot of the fortifications, Master Jean cried, "We will soon be there." The half-hour was striking, a few moments later, as we passed under the gate of France, at the end of the street where Lutz lives to-day. There the stage coach stopped. We were now nearly running, for we already heard the rumbling of the coach crossing the Place d'Armes. "We are just in time," said Master Jean.

As we were turning the corner, near Fouquet's, the lantern of the courier shone full upon us, coming from Eglise Street.

Then we went under the archway, where, by the great-

est of good chances, we found old Schmoûle waiting. He was on his way to Metz.

Almost immediately the coach stopped. There were a few places empty. Master Jean kissed Marguerite, but I, having put down the trunk, did not dare to advance.

"Come here," she said, extending her cheek to me. I kissed her while she whispered in my ear, "Work hard, Michell! Work hard!"

Schmoûle had already taken his seat in a corner. Master Jean, helping Marguerite into the carriage, said to him, "You will take care of her, Schmoûle. I place her under your protection."

"Rest easy," answered the Jew. "The daughter of our deputy will be well taken care of—trust to me."

I was delighted to know that Marguerite could travel with an old acquaintance. She was leaning out of the window, stretching her hand to me. The conductor went into the office to see if all the places had been paid for. Then he climbed up to his seat and shouted, "Go on, there!" The horses started as we were crying together, "Good by, Marguerite, good by!"

"Good by, Master Jean! Good by, Michell!"

The carriage rolled before us. It passed under the gate of France. We followed thoughtfully. A moment later we could only hear the sound of the bells as the horses galloped on the road to Sarrebourg. Master Jean said, "To-morrow at eight o'clock they will arrive at Metz. Chauvel will be there to meet Marguerite, and in five or six days they will be at Versailles." I said nothing.

We went back to the village, and I walked directly to our hut, where every one was sleeping the sleep of the just. I climbed up the ladder, and that night I did not have the bad dreams I had the night before.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ASSEMBLING OF THE STATES GENERAL

After the departure of Marguerite, everything became quiet for several days. The weather was threatening. We worked very hard, and in the evening I availed myself of the little time I had to read the books in Chauvel's library. It was full of books: Montesquieu, Voltaire, Buffon, Jean Jacques Rousseau; all the great writers of whom I had heard for the last ten years were represented there, the big ones in lines on the floor, the others above on the shelves. Ah, how I opened my eyes when I chanced on a page that was to my taste, and how delighted I was when, for the first time, I opened one of the big books, "The Encyclopedic Dictionary," of d'Alembert and Diderot, and began to understand that beautiful alphabetic order in which one can find anything he needs or wishes!

This is what appeared so admirable to me, and immediately I looked for the article on forging, in which one finds the history of the blacksmith's art, beginning with the Tubalcain of the Scriptures down to our own day, the manner or way of mining the ore, of smelting it, of tempering it, of forging it, and working it in its minutest details. I could not get over it, and when I told Master Jean a little about it the next day, he also was full of astonishment and admiration, and said that we young men had so many more opportunities, that in his day such

books did not exist or were too dear. Valentine also seemed to regard me with greater respect.

At the beginning of May, the ninth or tenth I believe, we received a letter from Chauvel, announcing his arrival at Versailles. He said that he was staying at the house of a master shoemaker on Saint-François Street, at fifteen francs a month.

The States General was just opened. He had no time to write more, but added at the end, "I hope Michel will not feel backward about taking my books home with him. Let him use them and take care of them, for one must always respect his friends, and these are the best of friends." I wish I had that first letter, but goodness knows what became of it. Master Jean had a bad habit of showing his letters and of lending them to everybody, so that three-quarters of them were lost.

What Chauvel had written proved that Marguerite had told her father of our talk, and that he approved of it. I was transported with a joy that was full of tenderness and courage, and from that day each evening I took home a volume of the "Encyclopedie" which I read, article after article, till two o'clock in the morning. Mother reproached me bitterly for such a waste of oil. I let her scold, but, when we were alone, father would say to me, "Learn, my child! Try to become a man. The one who knows nothing is always poor and works for others. Never mind! Don't listen to your mother!" And I did not listen to her, knowing well that she would be the first to profit by what I might learn.

At that time Monsieur le Curé Christopher and a lot of other people at Lutzelbourg were sick. The draining of the Steinbach marshes caused an epidemic of fever in

all the valley. One saw sick people with dragging limbs and chattering teeth on all sides. Master Jean and I visited the curé every Sunday. That strong man was only skin and bone, and we thought he would never get over it.

Fortunately old Freydingen of Diemeringen, who knew a remedy for marsh fevers, was called. He recommended parsley seed boiled in water, and Monsieur Christopher finally began to recover slowly.

During the month of May I remember that nothing was talked of in the country but the brigands who laid Paris waste. All the people of Baraques, with the people from the mountain, were for arming themselves with pitchforks and scythes, to intercept these rascals who were reported to be spreading all over the country burning the crops. But soon we heard that these brigands had been massacred in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, in the store of a paper-dealer, whose name was Réveillon, and our terror ceased for the time. Later the fright returned, but with much greater force, and every one looked about for a gun and some powder to defend himself when they should come. Naturally these reports disquieted me, the more so that for nearly two months we received no news except that which we gathered from the papers. Thank goodness, at last we received Chauvel's second letter, and this I kept, having taken care to copy it myself, because the other one had gone all about the country, and I couldn't get it back again. A bundle of newspapers, old and new, came with the letter.

That same day, Monsieur Christopher and his brother, the big Materne, who fought against the allies in 1814, under Hulin, came to visit us. The curé had no more

fever. He felt nearly recovered, and they both dined with us. It was before them that I read the letter; Dame Catharine, Nicole, and two or three notables were also there, all quite astonished that this Chauvel, known for his good sense and his prudence, permitted himself to write so sharply.

In a word, here is the letter. Any one, in passing through Paris, may see what we could have expected from the nobles and the bishops, if they had remained in control.

To Master Jean Leroux, Master Blacksmith of Baraques du-Bois-de-Chênes, near Phalsbourg.

July 1, 1789.

You should have received my letter of May 6 last in which I announced our arrival at Versailles. I told you that we had found, for fifteen francs a month, comfortable lodging with Antoine Pichot, master shoemaker, on Saint-François Street, in the St. Louis quarter, the old city. We always stay at the same place, and if you have something to write to us, it is of most importance to address your letter correctly.

I would like to know what sort of harvests you expect this year. Let Master Jean and Michel write to me about this. Here we are having continual stormy weather and many showers, with here and there bits of sunshine. We look for a bad year. What do you think? Marguerite desires news of our little orchard, and above all, of her flowers. Please remember this.

We live in this city quite like strangers. Two of my confrères, the Curé Jacques of Maisoncelle, near Nemours, and Pierre Gérard, syndic of Vic, in the baillie of Toul, lodge in the same house with us, they downstairs and we upstairs, with a little balcony on the side lane. Marguerite does the marketing for us, and for the kitchen also. Everything goes well. In the evening, in the room of Monsieur le Curé Jacques, we present our ideas. I take



my snuff, Gérard smokes his pipe, and we always finish up by understanding one another, more or less.

So much for our own affairs. Let us consider the nation. It is my duty to keep you informed of what is going on, but since our arrival we have had so many obstacles, so much annoyance, so much misfortune. The two higher orders, principally that of the nobles, have shown us so much ill will that I do not know myself where we will be able to come out. From day to day opinions changed, people were confident, then despairing. It took a lot of patience and self-control to bring the people to reason. Three times they had the better of the bargain, and it was only when they saw that we could do without them and would draw up the constitution without their help that they decided to come and take part in the deliberations at the assembly. Therefore, I could not send you any certain tidings, but to-day the game is won, and now we will consider everything in detail, from the beginning.

You will read this letter to the notables, for it is not for myself alone that I am here, but for everybody, and I would be a beggar if I did not give a full account of their affairs to those who have sent me. As I have made notes of the proceedings of every day, I shall not forget anything.

We came to Versailles on the 30th of April with three other deputies of the counties, and we stopped at the Hotel Souverains, which was full of guests. I will not tell what they charged for a plate of boullion or a cup of coffee. It is enough to make one shudder. All those servants and hotel-keepers are valets, from father to son, and live off the nobility, who live on the people, without troubling themselves about their misery. A plate of boullion, for which we pay two cents in our part of the country, here costs the price of a day's labor in Baraques, and it is considered so natural that the one who makes the least objection is looked upon as a vagabond, and is treated with contempt. It is the fashion here to permit

one's self to be robbed and imposed upon by that kind of people. You may well believe that this did not please me. When one has earned his bread laboriously and honestly for thirty years, he knows the price of things, and I was not backward about asking to see the proprietor of the hotel. He came, dressed in his black swallow-tail coat, and I told him what I thought of him. It was the first time he had received such compliments. The rogue tried to look contemptuously at me, but I paid him in the same coin with compound interest. If I had not been a deputy of the Third Estate, they would have shown me the door. Happily this title commands respect. I let my fellow-member, Gérard, tell me the next day that I had scandalized the whole pack of varlets, and I laughed heartily at it. It is about time that the grimace and bow of a lackey were not rated at the same figure as the labor of an honest man. I wanted to tell you about this first, so that you might know what kind of people we have to deal with.

Well, on the following day, after having run all over the city, I settled upon a place, and had my things carried there. It proved a good find, and my two fellow-members soon followed me. We are here all by ourselves living as cheaply as we can.

You should have seen Versailles on the 3d of May. It was the day of the king's presentation, and half of Paris was blocking the streets. The next day at the mass of the Holy Ghost the scene was still more extraordinary. You saw people even on the roofs. But before everything I must tell you about the presentation. The king and the court live in the Palace of Versailles on a sort of hillside, like that of Mittelbronn, between the city and gardens. Before the garden spreads a slightly sloping court, on both sides of which stretch great buildings in which the ministers reside. At the extreme end stands the palace. You can see all this from a mile off when you approach by the Avenue de Paris, which is four or five times as wide as our highway, and is bordered by fine trees. The court

is closed in front by a wrought-iron gate, which is exceedingly high. Behind the castle spread the gardens filled with fountains, statues, and other embellishments. How many thousands of men must have worked themselves to death in our fields to pay the taxes, the excises, the "twentieths," and so forth, to build such a palace! After that the nobles and the lackeys may live in it in comfort. We must have luxury, they say, to make business go, and that they may live in luxury at Versailles, three-quarters of France have worked till their tongues hang out for the last hundred years.

We had been informed of the presentation through posters and small books which are sold in quantity in the country. People fairly grabbed you by the collar to make you take them.

A number of the deputies of the Third Estate objected that we had been informed by posters, while the members of the first two orders had received direct notifications. As for me, I did not look at such things so closely, and I started at about noon-time with my fellow-members for the Menus Hall. It is in that hall that the States General is held. It is built outside of the castle on the Grand Avenue de Paris, on the site of the old workshops connected with the warehouse of the Menus-Plaisirs ["Pocket money"—literally "Little Pleasures."] of His Majesty the King. What the great and little pleasures of the king are, I do not know, but the hall is very fine. Two others are connected with it, and are at the disposal of the clergy and the nobility for their deliberations.

We started for the Menus Hall in procession, surrounded by people who cried, "Long live the Third Estate!" One could see that these good people understood that we were representing them, especially the crowd of Parisians which had arrived the day before. At the gate, before the palace, stood the Swiss guard. They dispersed the crowd in order to let us pass. We entered the court and then the palace, and mounted a staircase, the steps of which were covered with carpet, and the ceil-

ing strewn with golden fleurs-de-lis. Along the two balustrades stood magnificent lackeys all covered with gold embroidery. I think there must have been ten on each side, clear to the top.

At the first landing we entered a room more beautiful, bigger, and richer than anything I can describe. I thought it was the throne-room. It was only the ante-chamber.

At last, at the end of a quarter of an hour, a door directly in front of us opened, and through that, Master Jean, we passed into the real reception-room, magnificently arched, with big moldings and painted as you can never imagine anything could be painted. We were in a way lost in there, but all around stood the king's guard, with drawn swords. Suddenly, at the left, in the dead silence we heard the cries, "The king! the king!" The cries came nearer and nearer, and the master of ceremonies entering first, repeated himself, "Gentlemen, the king!"

You will say, Master Jean, that all this is a comedy. No doubt it is. But we must admit it is a comedy well calculated to exalt the pride of those who are called great and to inspire respect in those who are looked upon as small. The grand master of ceremonies, Monsieur the Marquis de Brézé, in court costume, looked like a superior being beside us poor deputies of the Third Estate, in our plain black cloth coats and breeches, and his air denoted sufficiently that he thought so himself. He approached our dean bowing, and almost immediately, the king advanced alone across the room. An arm-chair had been placed in the center for him, but he remained standing with his hat under his arm. Monsieur the Marquis, having made a sign to our dean to approach, presented him. Then came another, and so on through each bailiwick. He was informed of the name of the bailiwick, he repeated it, but the king said nothing. At last he told us that he was happy to see the deputies of the Third Estate. He spoke slowly and well. He is a big man with a round

face and a fat nose, lips, and chin, and a receding forehead. After that he retired, and we made our way out through another door. This is what is called a presentation.

As soon as I returned home, I took off my black coat and breeches, my buckled shoes and my hat. Gérard came and then the curé. Our day was wasted. But Marguerite had prepared us a leg of mutton with garlic, of which we ate half with a good appetite, and emptied a pitcher while talking over our affairs. Gérard and a goodly number of the deputies of the Third Estate complained of the presentation, saying it ought to have taken place with the three orders united. They thought that we could infer from that that the court wanted the separation of the orders. Some blamed the master of ceremonies for the presentation, while I thought, we will see! If the court is opposed to individual voting, we will take measures; we are warned. The next day very early all the bells were ringing, and the streets were filled with joyous cries and rumors without end. It was the day of the mass of the Holy Ghost, celebrated to implore the blessing of the Almighty on the States General.

The three orders assembled in the Church of Notre Dame, where they chanted the *Veni Creator*. After this ceremony, which was made very pleasant by the beautiful voices and the good music, we made our way in a procession to the Church of St. Louis. We were at the head, the nobles followed, and then the clergy preceding the Host. The streets were hung with tapestries belonging to the crown, and the multitude cried, "Long live the Third Estate!" It was the first time that the people did not declare themselves for fine clothes, for we did look like crows beside these peacocks, in their hats with curling plumes and coats gilded on all seams, well rounded legs, cocked elbows, and swords at their sides. The king and queen, surrounded by their suite, closed the march or procession. Some cries of "Long live the king! Long live the Duke d'Orleans!" were raised, while the bells con-

tinued pealing. The people have some sense. Not a fool among so many thousands of souls cried, "Long live the Count d'Artois, the queen, and the bishops!" Yet they looked very beautiful.

At the Church of St. Louis the mass began. Then the Bishop of Nancy, Monsieur de la Fare, delivered a long sermon against the luxury of the court, the same that the bishops have been preaching for centuries, without dispensing with a single bit of gold on their miters, their chasubles, or their dais.

This ceremony lasted until four o'clock in the afternoon. Every one thought it was quite long enough, and that we would then have the satisfaction of talking over our own affairs. But no, not yet. The next day, on the 5th of May, the opening of the States General, we assisted at another ceremony. These people live on ceremonies, or, to speak plainly, comedies. Well, the next day, all the States General met in our hall, called the hall of the Third Estate. It is lighted from the top through a round opening draped with white satin, and it has columns on two sides. At the extreme end a throne was raised, under a magnificent dais, all covered with golden fleurs-de-lis.

The Marquis of Brézé and the master of ceremonies placed the deputies. Their work began at nine o'clock, and ended at half-past twelve. We were called. Then we were conducted to our places and shown where to sit. At the same time the councilors of state, the ministers and secretaries of state, the governors and lieutenants general of provinces, were also being placed. A long table covered with a green cloth, below the platform, was reserved for the secretaries of state. At one end sat Necker, at the other Monsieur de Saint-Priest. If I were to tell you all in detail I should never get through.

The clergy sat at the right of the throne, the nobility at the left, and we in front. The representatives of the clergy were 291, those of the nobility 270, and we 578. There were still a few of us missing, as the elections at

Paris did not close until the nineteenth. But that was not noticeable.

At last, near one o'clock, the king and queen were informed that we were ready. Almost immediately they appeared, preceded and followed by the princes and princesses of the royal family and their courtly suites. The king took his place on the throne, the queen at his side in a big arm-chair, outside the dais, the royal family around the throne, the princes, the ministers, and peers of the realm a little farther down, and the remainder of the suites on the steps of the platform. The ladies of the court, beautifully dressed, occupied the galleries of the hall on the side of the platform. As for the simple spectators, they occupied the galleries between the columns.

The king wore a round hat, the band of which was studded with pearls, and surmounted by a big diamond known as the Pit. Every one sat in an arm-chair, a chair, bench, or taboret, according to his rank and dignity, for these things are of the greatest importance. Upon that depends the greatness of a nation. I would not have believed it if I had not seen it. Everything is laid out for these ceremonies. May it please heaven that our affairs may be in as good order! But the questions of etiquette are of the first order, and it is only at the end of centuries that they find time to trouble themselves about the miseries of the people.

I wish Valentine had been here in my place for two or three hours. He could have explained to you the difference between that bonnet and another, of that dress and the next. As for me, what interested me most was when the grand master of ceremonies signaled to us to be attentive, and when the king began to read his speech. All that I remember of it is that he was pleased to see us, that he enjoined us to come to a good understanding, to make new methods unnecessary to pay the deficit, that in this hope he had assembled us, that the debt would be put before us for consideration, and that he was assured in advance that we would find a good means of meeting it

and of strengthening the credit, that this was the most ardent of his wishes, and that he loved his people well. Then he sat down, telling us that his grand master of the seals was going to make us understand his intentions better. The hall was ringing with the cries of "Long live the king!" The master of the seals, Monsieur de Barentin, stood up and told us that the first desire of His Majesty was to spread his benefactions, and that the virtues of the sovereign were the first resource of the nation in difficult times, and that, therefore, our sovereign had resolved to consummate the happiness of the people, and that he had called us to help him, and that the third dynasty of our kings was especially entitled to the gratitude of every good Frenchman, that it had strengthened the order of succession to the crown, and that it had abolished all humiliating distinctions "between the proud successors of the conquerors and the humble posterity of the vanquished." But, in spite of that, he esteemed the nobility, for the love of order has established ranks among people and they have to be maintained in a monarchy. Lastly, the will of the king was to see us assembled on the morrow to exercise promptly our powers and to occupy ourselves with important matters which he had indicated, namely, money.

After that, Monsieur the Master of the Seals sat down and Monsieur Necker read us a very long discourse bearing upon the debt, which amounted to sixteen hundred millions, and produced an annual deficit of fifty million one hundred and fifty thousand francs. He recommended that we pay this deficit, but he did not tell us a word about the constitution which our constituents charged us with establishing.

The same evening, as we left very much astonished, we heard that two new regiments, the Royal-Cravate and Bourgogne-Cavalerie, with a Swiss battalion, had just arrived in Paris, and that a number of other regiments were on the way. This news gave us a terrible lot to think about, the more so that the queen, Monsieur the



Count d'Artois, Monsieur the Prince de Condé, Monsieur the Duke de Polignac, Monsieur the Duke d'Enghien, and Monsieur the Prince de Conti did not approve of the convocation of the States General, and that they doubted we would pay the debt if we were not helped a little. If any one but princes had acted like that it would have been called setting a trap, but the names of actions change with the dignities of those who commit them. Being princes it was simply called a *coup d'état* which they were preparing. Fortunately I had already seen something of the Parisians and I thought that these good people would not leave us to fight it out alone.

That evening after supper my two fellow-members fell in with my views—that we would have to rely upon ourselves rather than upon any one else, and that the coming of these regiments boded no good for the Third Estate.

It was on the 6th of May that things began to take a turn. After that session, all the ceremonies of which I told you and the discourses to which we listened amounted to nothing. But presently you are going to hear something really new.

On the following day at nine o'clock, Gérard, Monsieur le Curé Jacques, and I came to the hall of the States General. All the hangings of the baldachin and the carpets of the throne had been taken away. The hall was almost empty. But the deputies of the Third Estate had begun to arrive. Their benches were being filled. On the right and left people were talking and making the acquaintance of their neighbors, like those who have to come to an understanding over serious matters. Twenty minutes later almost all the deputies of the Third Estate were assembled. We were waiting for the representatives of the nobility and the clergy. But not a single one appeared.

Suddenly one of our people came and told us that the two other orders were assembled, each in its own hall, and were deliberating. Naturally this produced as much surprise as indignation. We decided immediately to

name as president of the Third Estate a bald old man, our dean, as far as age went, whose name is Leroux, like your own, Master Jean. He accepted, and chose six other members of the assembly to help him.

It took some time to reestablish order, for thousands of thoughts crowded one upon the other. Every one wanted to say what he foresaw, what he feared, and the measures he thought necessary to take in such a grave situation. At last all became calm, and Monsieur Malouets an old employee of the navy administration, as I was told, proposed to send a deputation to the two privileged order, to invite them to join us in the hall of the general assemblies. A young deputy named Mounier answered him, saying that such an advance would compromise the dignity of the communes, that there was no need for hurry, for we would probably soon be instructed as to what the privileged ones had decided, and that it would then be time enough to decide what to do. I thought so, too. Our dean added that we could still consider ourselves members of the States General, since the states had not yet been organized, or our powers recognized. For this reason he refused to open letters addressed to the Assembly. This was acting with good sense. Many other things were said that day which amounted to no more than this.

About half-past two o'clock a deputy from the department of Dauphiné brought us the news that the two other orders had decided that they would organize (*verifier*) separately. Then the session was closed tumultuously, and was adjourned until the next day at nine o'clock.

Everything was becoming clear. It was easy to see that the king, the queen, the princes, the nobles, and the bishops thought we were very good to pay their debts, but that they did not trouble themselves about drawing up a constitution on the strength of which the people might have a voice in the matter. They preferred to make their debts alone, without opposition or control, and to summon us together once in two hundred years to

accept them in the name of the people, and to consent to imposts to the end of time. You can imagine our thoughts after this discovery, and our anger.

We remained until midnight giving vent to our indignation against the selfishness and abominable injustice of the court. After that I said to my fellow-members that it would be best to remain calm, at least in public, and to have the right on our side, to use persuasion if it was possible, and to let the people come to their own conclusions. This is what we had resolved, and on the morrow, when we came to our hall, we saw that the deputies of the other communes must have made the same resolution, for instead of the great tumult of the day before, everything was quiet and dignified. The dean in his place with his aides on the platform were writing, receiving letters, and depositing them on the desk.

The deliberations of the nobility and the clergy were handed to us in the form of memorials. I will inclose them to you so that you can see what those people thought and wanted. The clergy had decided, by a majority of 133 to 114 votes, to legalize their own powers. The nobility did the same, by a vote of 88 to 47, in spite of the good sense and good heart of the following men of their party, who opposed their injustice: Viscount de Castellane, the Duke de Liancourt, the Marquis de Lafayette, the deputies of the Dauphiné, and those of the seneschals' district, of Aix and of Provence. They had already named twelve commissions to legalize their powers among themselves.

On that day Monsieur Malouet renewed the proposition to send a deputation to the privileged orders to request them to join the deputies of the communes. Upon that Count Mirabeau arose. I shall often speak of that man to you. Although a nobleman, he is a deputy of the Third Estate, because the nobility of his country refused to admit him, under the pretext that he did not own any fief. He immediately became a merchant, and the city of Aix sent him to us. He is a Provençal. He is big,

thick-set, with a bony forehead, big eyes, and a homely yellow face all pock-marked. He has a sharp voice, and always begins to speak by stammering. But once fairly started, everything changes, everything becomes clear. One seems to see what he says, one believes that he always thought like the speaker, and from time to time his sharp high voice lowers when he is going to say something grand or strong. Then it rolls and bursts like a clap of thunder. I cannot give you any idea of the change in the face of the man. Everything seems to go together, the voice, the eyes, the gestures, the ideas. You forget yourself in listening to him. He holds you and you cannot let go. While he speaks for us, everything will be right. But we must be on our guard. I for one do not trust him. First of all, he is a nobleman. Then, he is a man without money, with terrible appetite and debts. Only to look at his big bony nose, enormous jaws, and big stomach, covered with crumpled laces—which are magnificent, nevertheless—one thinks, “It would take Alsace and Lorraine and Franche-Comté, with a few suburbs added, to satisfy you.” But I blessed the nobility for not having wanted to enlist him in its services. We were sorely in need of his help at the beginning, as you will see farther on.

On that day, the 7th of May, Mirabeau did not say much. He only represented to us that, to send a deputation, we would have to be organized properly, and since we were not organized, and did not want to be organized without the others, the best thing we could do was to wait.

The lawyer Mounier then said that we could at least allow such of the deputies of the Third Estate as would want to undertake it to go individually, and not as on a mission, to invite the nobles and the bishops to join us according to the wish of the king. As this did not compromise anything, the advice was followed. Twelve of our members went to seek information, and they soon returned with the announcement that, in the hall of the nobility, they had found only commissions occupied in

legalizing the power of those gentlemen, and in the hall of the clergy, the whole order being assembled. The president had answered that they would consider our proposition. An hour later the bishops of Montpellier and Orange, with four other ecclesiastics, entered our hall, and told us that their order had decided to name delegates who would join ours and those of the nobility, to decide if the powers were to be legalized in common.

This answer caused us to adjourn from the 7th to the 12th of May, and I made the most of those four days of vacation to visit Paris with my fellow-members and Marguerite. We did not have time to stop on our arrival, on the 30th of April, two days after the pillaging of the Réveillon house on the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Then the agitation was great, the guards of the prevost were making searches, and there were rumors that a crowd of bandits had come. I was curious to know what was going on there, to know if quiet had been restored, and what they thought of our first sessions. The Parisians who came and went gave me some idea of it. But it is always better to see things for one's self.

We started early in the morning, and at the end of three hours, our coach entered into that immense city, that one cannot possibly represent to himself, not only on account of the height of its houses, the number of its streets and alleys, the age of the buildings, the number of cross-roads, of blind alleys, cafés, and stores, and show-cases of all kinds, all standing close together as far as the eye can see, and signs climbing up the sides of the houses up to the roofs, but because the innumerable cries of the venders of fish, of fruit, and dealers of all kinds, and a thousand other kinds of people dragging hand-carts, carrying water, vegetables, and other provisions. One would think he was entering a menagerie where a lot of American birds, each cried in his own way, in a manner one had never heard before. And the rumbling of wagons, the bad smell of the heaps of refuse, the sickly looks of the people who want to be dressed according to the latest

fashion, with frippery, who sing, dance, laugh, and show themselves full of good feeling toward strangers, full of good sense, and gayety in their poverty, who see everything in rose color, provided they can take their walks, say what they think in the café, and read the newspapers. All that, Master Jean, makes this city something unique in the world. It resembles nothing in our country. Nancy is a palace beside Paris, but a palace empty and dead. Here everything is alive.

The unfortunate Parisians are still suffering from the famine of last winter. A great number of them are really only skin and bone. But in spite of all this they joke and laugh, and in all the show windows you can see funny pictures for sale.

When I saw all this I was transported with delight. I at last found myself in my real country. Instead of carrying my pack from village to village for long hours at a stretch, I could have found buyers here at every step, so to say. It is also the country of real patriots. These people, poor and sickly as they are, value their rights above everything. All the rest comes after. Our fellow-member Jacques has a sister who keeps a fruit store on Bouloi Street near the Palais-Royal. It is there that we stopped. All along the road, from the moment we entered the faubourg, we heard only one song:

Long live the Third Estate of France!  
Which will have preponderance  
Over prince and over prelate—  
Oh, the poor nobility!  
The plebeians are wells of science,  
In light and experience  
Surpassing priest and magistrate—  
Oh, the poor nobility!

If it had been known that we were of the Third Estate they would have been capable of carrying us in triumph. Indeed, to abandon such a people one must be very cowardly. And I assure you if we had not been decided, the sight of their courage, their gayety, and all their virtues,

in the midst of the greatest poverty, would have appealed to our hearts, and we would then and there have sworn to fulfil our trust, and to clamor for our rights even to the death.

We spent four days at the widow Le Franc's. Marguerite, with my fellow-member, the Curé Jacques, saw all of Paris, the Jardin des Plantes, Notre Dame, the Palais-Royal, and even the theaters. My pleasure consisted in running around the streets, going here and there, promenading on the squares, all along the Seine where they sell the little books, on the bridges all hung with old duds, lined with fish-venders, talking to anybody I found sitting on his doorstep, stopping to listen to a blind man singing, or to watch a comedy played in the open air. There is no dearth of trained dogs, nor pullers of teeth, with their big bass drum and fife. But the comedy on the Pont Neuf is the finest thing out. There are always princes and nobles at whom they poke fun, and it is they who are always saying foolish things. Two or three times I laughed so that the tears rolled down my cheeks.

I visited the commune of Paris, where they were discussing the memorials. This commune has adopted a very wise resolution. It has instituted a permanent commission to watch over its deputies, to advise them, and even warn them if they do not happen to fulfil their trust. This is a famous arrangement, Master Jean, which has, unfortunately, been neglected in other places. What is a deputy who is not controlled, and who can sell his vote with impunity, and laugh in his sleeve at those who send him? He may have become rich while the others have remained poor. He is protected by the power that has bought him, and his constituents are left without support or redress. This measure taken by the commune of Paris ought to work to our advantage also. It is one of the articles to place at the head of the constitution. It is absolutely necessary that the constituents should be in position to break, prosecute, and condemn those who abuse their trust. Until then everything will go haphaz-

ard. In a word, this decision pleased me. Now I continue.

Besides my great joy at this movement among the people, I had the satisfaction of realizing that the people here know very well what they want and what they are doing. I went the evening after the supper to the Palais-Royal, which the Duke of Orleans leaves open to everybody. This duke is a debauchee, but at least he is not a hypocrite. After having passed the night at the public house, or elsewhere, he would not go to hear mass and receive absolution, to begin all over again, the next day. They say he is the friend of Sieyès and Mirabeau. Some reproach him with having drawn a lot of rogues to Paris charged with robbing and pillaging the city. But that is hard to believe, because rogues come of their own accord. After such a terrible winter they are looking for food, and I myself know that one does not need to invite locusts to fall upon harvests.

Anyway, the queen and the court detest the duke, and that makes him many friends. His Palais-Royal is always open, and inside are avenues of trees, under which every one can walk. Four lines of arcades surround the garden, and under them are the finest stores and most elegant taverns in Paris. This is the meeting-place of the gilded youth and newspaper men who talk loudly for or against things without paying any attention to people who may hear them. As for what they say, it is not always of the brightest, and it goes through one's head as through a sieve. The grain which may remain is not heavy—they sell more straw than meal. Two or three times I have listened well and then as I went out, I asked myself, in perplexity, "What have they been talking about?" But, never mind, the principle is always good, and some have really a great deal of good sense.

Under the trees we drank a bottle of very expensive wine of a poor quality. Rents also are very expensive. I have been told that the smallest of these stores rent for three thousand francs a year. No wonder they have to



take it out of their customers! This Palais-Royal is in reality a great fair, and at night when the lanterns are lighted it is a beautiful sight.

On the 11th, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, we departed, well pleased with our excursion, and assured that the great mass of the Parisians were for the Third Estate. That was the principal thing. On the 12th, at nine o'clock, we were at our posts again. Our delegates had been unable to come to an understanding with those of the clergy and the nobility, and we saw that they were simply trying to make us lose time. This is why, at that session, we took the measures necessary to go ahead. The dean and the older members were instructed to draw up a list of the deputies, and we decided that every week a commission composed of one deputy from each province should be appointed to maintain order at the conferences, gather and count the votes, be acquainted with the majority of opinions, etc.

The following day we received a deputation of the nobles to notify us that their order was organized, that they had named their president, and their secretaries, opened their registers, and adopted several resolutions, among others that of proceeding to the legalizing of their rights. They had made up their minds to do without us.

The same day the clergy notified us that they had appointed commissioners to sit in conference with those of the nobility and those of the Third Estate with a view to legalizing their rights in common, and to the reuniting of the orders.

This gave rise to a great discussion. Some wanted to appoint the commissioners, others proposed to declare that we would not recognize as legal representatives those whose rights had not been authorized at the general assembly, and further that we invite the deputies of the church and the nobility to join us in the hall of the States General, where we had been waiting for them for eight days.

As the discussion became more heated, and as a number

of members still wanted the floor, the debates were postponed until the next day. Rabaud de Saint-Étienne, a Protestant minister, Viguier, deputy of Toulouse, Thouret, attorney to the parliament of Rouen, Barnave, deputy of the Dauphiné, Boissy-d'Anglas, deputy of the Languedoc, all men of great talent, and admirable orators, especially Barnave, were divided in opinion—some for going ahead, others for waiting and giving the clergy and nobility time for reflection. As if all their reflection had not been made! Finally Rabaud de Saint-Étienne got the better of them, and sixteen members were chosen to confer with the commissioners of the nobles and bishops.

At our session of the 23d it was proposed to appoint a committee for the purpose of writing up accounts of the things that had happened since the opening of the States General. But the proposition was rejected, for it was feared that a plain statement of facts would increase the agitation of the people by showing up the intrigues of the nobles and clergy to paralyze the Third Estate.

On the 22d and 23d the news had already spread that His Majesty thought of presenting to us the project of a loan. If they had had this loan they might have done without us, since the deficit would have been made up. Only our children would have had to pay the interest forever. At the same time masses of troops were gathering around Paris and Versailles.

On the 26th the laws of discipline and order were passed, and our commissioners came to announce that they could not come to an agreement with the commissioners of the nobility.

The following day, the 27th, Mirabeau summed up all that had transpired, and said: "The nobility does not want to join to legalize our rights in common. We wish to legalize our rights in common with the others. The clergy perseveres in its efforts to conciliate us. I propose that we empower a large and solemn deputation to adjure them, in the name of the God of peace, to place themselves on the side of wisdom, justice, and truth,

and to join us, their co-deputies, in the hall of the commune!"

All this took place in sight of the people. The crowd was around us, and it was not backward in applauding those who pleased them.

On the 28th a barrier to separate the Assembly from the public was ordered to be put up, and a deputation was sent to the clergy with instructions in the sense indicated by Mirabeau.

On that same day we received a letter from the king: "His Majesty had been informed that the difficulties between the three orders concerning the legalizing of rights were not yet adjusted. His Majesty saw with pain and anxiety that the Assembly convened for the purpose of regenerating the kingdom was wasting time in a pernicious inactivity. Under these circumstances he invited the commissioners appointed by the three orders to resume their conferences in the presence of the grand master of the seals, and a committee which His Majesty would appoint himself, so that he might be informed most particularly of the overtures toward reconciliation which might be made, and to be able to contribute directly to a harmonious understanding, so much to be desired."

It seems it was we, the deputies of the communes, who were the cause of the inaction of the States General for these last three weeks. It was we who wanted to separate ourselves, and who were standing on old privileges contrary to the rights of the nation. His Majesty evidently thought we were children.

A number of deputies spoke in opposition to this letter, a certain man named Camus among them. They said that new conferences would be useless, that the nobility would not hearken to reason, and that, anyway, the communes ought not to accept the surveillance of the master of the seals, who would naturally side with the nobles, that our commissioners would stand before those of the king like litigants before judges, who would be prepared in advance to condemn, and that the same thing would

happen that took place in 1589. At that time the king had also proposed to pacify the people, and he did it very effectually by a decree of the council. Many of the deputies thought the same, and considered this letter in the light of a snare.

Nevertheless, on the morrow, the 29th, "in order to exhaust every means of conciliation, we drew up an humble address to thank the king for his goodness, and to tell him that the commissioners of the Third Estate were ready to sit in session with those of the clergy and nobility." But on the following Monday, the 1st of June, Rabaud de Saint-Étienne, one of our commissioners, having brought us the news that Minister Necker had advised us to accept the legalizing of rights by orders and to refer all doubtful questions to the decision of the council, we saw plainly that Camus was right. We saw that the king himself was against the legalizing of rights in common, that he wanted the three separate chambers instead of one, and that he sided with the clergy and nobility, and against the Third Estate. Henceforth we could rely only upon ourselves.

Everything I have told you so far, Master Jean, is exactly true, and it shows you that these big words, these phrases, these flowers of speech, as they say, are useless. The first man you meet in Baraques, provided he have good sense, can see clearly, and all these inventions of style are useless and even detrimental to clearness. Everything can be made intelligible in simple words: You want this? I want that. You surround us with soldiers. The Parisians are with us. You have powder, muskets, cannon, Swiss mercenaries, etc. We are armed only with our mandates. But we are tired of being robbed, ground down, and despoiled. You deem yourselves the stronger. Well, we will see.

This is the whole story. All the inventions of words and speeches where right and justice are evident are useless. We have been hoodwinked. Let us come to an understanding. We pay and we want to know what

becomes of our money; and first of all, we want to pay as little as possible. Our children are soldiers. We want to know who commands them, why those men command them, and what we get out of it. You have orders of the nobility and the Third Estate. Why these distinctions? Why are the children of one class superior to those of another? Do they belong to a different species? Do they proceed from the gods and we from animals? This is what we want to make clear. Now let us proceed. The nobility relied on its troops and thought they could use force. Therefore, they rejected our propositions. And so, having gathered on the 21st of June, after the reading of the results of the conferences of our commissioners with those of the nobles, Mirabeau said that the deputies of the communes could wait no longer, that they had duties to fulfil, and that it was time to begin, that a member of the deputation of Paris had a motion of the greatest importance to make, and that he invited the Assembly to hear him.

This member was the Abbé Sieyès, a man from the south, of about forty to forty-five years of age. He does not speak well, and has a weak voice. But his ideas are very good. I have sold a great many of his pamphlets, as you know, and they have been productive of the greatest good. This is what he said, amid the deepest silence:

"Since the opening of the States General, the deputies of the communes have conducted themselves frankly and calmly. They have shown all the regard compatible with their characters for the nobility and the clergy, while the two privileged orders have repaid them only by hypocrisy and subterfuges. The Assembly can no longer remain inactive without being false to its duties and its constituents. Therefore, we must proceed with the legalizing of rights. The nobility refuses. Can the refusal of one order compel the rest to remain immovable? No. Therefore, the Assembly has but one thing to do, and that is to invite for the last time the members of the privileged chamber to proceed to the hall of the States General, to

be present, to concur, and submit to the legalizing of the rights in common, and in case of refusal, to carry it over their heads."

Mirabeau then said that it would be necessary to act in default of action by the clergy and the nobility.

A second session took place the same day from five to eight o'clock. The motion of the Abbé Sieyès was adopted, and it was decided, at the same time, to send an address to the king, to explain the motives that prompted the resolution adopted by the Third Estate. On Friday, the 12th of June, we had to notify the two other orders of our decision, and recast the address to the king. Monsieur Malouet proposed an address written in a manly and vigorous style, but full of compliments. Monsieur Volney, who is said to have traveled through Egypt and the Holy Land, answered him, "Let us beware of all these eulogies dictated by baseness and flattery and born of self-interest. We are here in the abode of trickery and intrigue. The air we breathe here breeds corruption in the hearts. The representatives of the nation, alas, seem to have been tainted already." He continued in the same strain and Malouet said not another word.

Finally, after great debates, it was decided to carry by deputation to the king an address drawn up by Monsieur Barnave, containing an exposition of all that had taken place since the opening of the States General and what the Third Estate had decided. Our deputation returned without having seen the king, for he was attending a hunt. When another deputation from the nobility came to announce that their order was considering our propositions, Monsieur Bailly, deputy of the Third Estate from Paris, answered, "Gentlemen, the members of the communes have been waiting a long time for the gentlemen of the nobility," and without allowing ourselves to be put off by this new ceremony, which like all the others, had only the purpose of dragging us from day to day, from week to week, the roll-call of the bailiwicks (counties) began, after having named Monsieur Bailly *pro tempore*

president, and empowering him to name two members as secretaries, to draw up a verbal process of the roll-call, and the other proceedings of the assembly.

The roll-call began at seven o'clock and ended at ten. At last we were constituted a body for business, not in Third Estate as was wanted of us, but in the States General. The two privileged orders were, therefore, private assemblies, while we were the assembly of the nation. We had lost five weeks through the ill will of the nobles and the bishops, and you will see what they did further to prevent us from progressing.

I will not tell you of the discussion which arose over words, which followed and which ate up three long sessions, to find out whether we should be called Representatives of the French People, as Mirabeau wished, or the Legitimate Assembly of the Representatives of the Majority of the Nation acting in the Absence of the Minority, as Mounier would have had it, or Legalized and Recognized Representatives of the French Nation, as Sieyès demanded. I would have quietly taken the name of States General. The nobles and the bishops refused to appear there. That was their business. But we were no less, for all that, the States General of 1789, and we no less represented the ninety-six per cent of France. Upon a new motion of Sieyès, the title of National Assembly was adopted.

But the best was that, from our declaration of the 12th, every day saw some good priest leaving the assembly of the bishops and coming to have his rights legalized with us. On the 13th three came from Poitou, on the 14th six others, on the 15th two, on the 16th six, and so on. You can imagine our joy and enthusiasm and how we embraced them. Our president spent half the time at the sessions in complimenting those brave curés with tears in his eyes. Among the first was Monsieur l'Abbé Grégoire, from Emberménil, to whom I had sold many a pamphlet. When I saw him coming I ran to meet him and embraced him and whispered in his ear, "That is

right. You are following the example of Christ, who did not go to the princes or the high priests, but to the people."

He laughed while I imagine the bishop's faces in the hall hard by. What a downfall! The fact of the matter is, the curés would have been simple to remain with them who had been humiliating them for so many centuries. Is the heart of the people not the same whether it beats under the cassock of the priest or the smock frock of the peasant?

On the 17th, in the presence of some four or five thousand spectators, who surrounded us, the Assembly declared itself constituted, and each member took his oath as follows: "We swear and promise to fulfil with zeal and fidelity the duty with which we have been charged." Then Bailly was confirmed as president of the National Assembly, which declared by a unanimous vote, "that the Assembly consented provisionally to the collection of the imposts already laid, though illegally established and collected, but only until such a time as the Assembly might be dissolved for any cause whatsoever, after which day all collecting of imposts would cease throughout all the provinces of the kingdom, by the very fact of dissolution."

Think this over, Master Jean, and make the notables of the country understand the full meaning of it. Our misery during so many centuries was caused by our stupidity. We were too timid to refuse to pay imposts that had not been voted by our representatives. Money is the sinews of war, and we have always given money to those who put the rope on our necks. At any rate, whoever would pay the imposts after the dissolution of the Assembly, would be the meanest of rascals. He would be betraying his father, mother, wife, children, himself, and his fatherland. And those who would try to collect them should not be considered as Frenchmen, but as brigands. This is the first principle proclaimed by the National Assembly of 1789.

The session closed at five o'clock, and was adjourned



until the evening of the same day. You can imagine how the king, the queen, the princes, the court, and the bishops opened their eyes when they heard of this proclamation of the Third Estate. During the session Monsieur Bailly had been asked to go to the chancellery to receive a letter from the king. But the Assembly did not permit him to absent himself. At the evening session Monsieur Bailly read the king's letter, in which His Majesty disapproved of the term "privileged" orders, which some deputies had used to designate the nobility and the clergy. The word did not please him. It was, he said, contrary to the harmony which ought to exist between us. But the thing itself did not appear contrary to harmony. The thing itself could remain. This, Master Jean, proves what I was telling you before. Injustice does not exist at court, where it is called justice, nor baseness when one chooses to call it grandeur. What answer can one make to this? Everybody remained silent.

On the following day we took part in a body in a procession of the Host through the streets of Versailles. On Friday, the 19th, the committees were organized. There were four: the first for ways and means, the second for the legalizations, the third for correspondence and record, and the fourth for the ordinances. Everything was in good shape, and we hoped to make speedy headway. But this did not please the court very much, the less so because that very evening at six o'clock they learned that one hundred and forty-nine deputies of the clergy had declared themselves in favor of the legalizing of rights in common.

We had borne everything to be faithful to our trusts. We had been calm. We had not given way to the indignation and anger which insolence and hypocrisy inspire. Seeing that all the means to turn us from our purpose, to exasperate us, and goad us on to make mistakes were not sufficient, they resolved to use others more coarse and humiliating.

It was on the 20th of June that it all began.

On that day, very early in the morning, we heard it published through the streets by heralds at arms, "that the king having resolved to hold a royal session at the States General, on Monday, June 22d, it was necessary, in order to make suitable preparations, to suspend the assemblies until the date of the above-mentioned session, and that His Majesty would make known by a new proclamation the hour at which he would attend the States General on Monday." It was also learned at the same time that a detachment of the French guard had taken possession of Menus Hall. ✓

Every one saw at once that the dangerous moment had come. At seven o'clock I had the pleasure of seeing my fellow-members, Gérard and the Curé Jacques, mounting the stairs to my room. The session was to begin at eight o'clock. While at breakfast we made the resolution to stand firmly by our president, who represented our union, and consequently our strength. To tell you the truth, we considered those who impeded the progress of the country as rogues, as men who had never lived but by the labor of others, creatures without experience, without capacity, without delicacy or genius, and whose whole strength lay in the ignorance and stupidity of the people, who always allow themselves to be taken in by the magnificence of lackeys without thinking that all this gold braid, these embroidered coats, and these plumed hats, all these state carriages, and these horses have been bought by their own labor and the impudence of the rascals who draw the money out of their pocket. As for the measure of closing the doors of the Assembly to us, it was so base that it made us shrug our shoulders with pity. Naturally our good king was not aware of these things. His mild, calm mind did not descend to these miseries. We blessed him for his goodness and his simplicity without charging him for the stupidity and insolence of the court.

At a quarter before eight we left the house. In approaching the Menus Hall we saw about a hundred depu-

ties of the Third Estate gathered on the esplanade, Bailly, our president, in their midst. I must give you a picture of this brave man. Up to the present time, in a crowd of others, he had hardly shown himself. We had chosen him because he had the reputation of being very learned and very honest. He is a man of about fifty or fifty-five years of age. His face is long and his mien dignified and firm. He never precipitates anything. He listens and thinks a long time before making up his mind, but once having resolved he never turns back.

Many of the deputies also were arriving through different avenues. On the stroke of nine we approached the hall of the States General, Monsieur Bailly and the two secretaries in advance. A number of French guards were pacing up and down before the door. The moment they saw us approach, an officer in command appeared and advanced; Monsieur Bailly engaged in a lively discussion with him. I was not near enough to hear, but we immediately conjectured that the door was closed to us. The officer, the Count de Vertan, a very polite man, was excusing himself for his orders. Indignation was taking possession of us. At the end of twenty minutes the Assembly was almost completed, and as the officer on guard, in spite of his politeness, would not let us pass, a number of deputies protested with force. And then we went up the avenue as far as the iron gate amid the greatest tumult. Some cried that we ought to go to Marly to hold our assembly under the windows of the château. Others said that the king wanted to plunge the nation in the horrors of civil war, and starve the country, and that nothing equal to it had been seen even under the greatest despots, Louis XI, Richelieu, and Mazarin. Half of Versailles joined in our indignation. The people, men and women, surrounded us and listened.

Monsieur Bailly had disappeared at about ten o'clock. We did not know what had become of him, when three deputies came to tell us that, after having taken the papers from the hall of the Estates, with the aid of the com-

missioners who went with him, he had transported them to a large hall which had been used as a court for games on Saint-François Street, almost opposite my own dwelling, and that the hall could accommodate the Assembly.

We started, escorted by the people, to go to this place where they played ball. Going down the street, which runs parallel with the rear of the château, which is called the Great Communes, we entered into the old building at about noon-time. The affront we had just received showed clearly enough that the nobles and the bishops were tired of showing us any consideration, that we had to prepare to receive other indignities, and that we should take measures not only for the purpose of securing the execution of our mandates, but also to safeguard our very existence. Those benighted people, accustomed to employ force, knew no other law. Fortunately we were not far from Paris. That crossed their plans.

Well, let us proceed. The hall of the games was of square construction, about thirty-six feet high, paved with big flag-stones, without pillars or cross-beams, and the ceiling made of wide planks, lighted by a few windows quite high above the ground, which gave the interior a somber aspect. All around are narrow wooden galleries, which have to be crossed in order to get to this sort of covered market-place, which must have existed for a long time. At all events, such buildings are not put up of quarried stone for children's games. Everything was lacking there. There were neither chairs nor tables. We had to borrow some from the neighboring houses. The owner of the establishment, a little bald-headed man, seemed delighted at the honor that was done him. We put a table in the middle of the hall with chairs around it. The Assembly remained standing and the crowd took possession of the galleries.

Then Bailly got on a chair and began to recall to our minds all that had happened. Then he read to us the two letters of the Marquis de Brézé, master of ceremonies, in which this lord communicated to him the order to sus-

pend our reunions until the royal session. Both letters had the same object, only the second one added that the order was positive. Then Monsieur Bailly proposed that we begin to deliberate upon the measures we should take.

It is not necessary, I think, Master Jean, to depict to you our emotion. When one represents a great people, and when one sees that people outraged in his own person, when one remembers what our fathers have suffered from a class of strangers who for hundreds of years have lived at our expense and have done their best to hold us in servitude, and when, besides, they remind you with insolence, but a few days before, that it is only by grace that they forget for an instant their superiority, "of the descendants of the proud conquerors over the humble posterity of the vanquished," and when one perceives that, by means of ruse and insolence, they wish to continue upon us and our descendants the same system, then, unless one should become worthy of such abominable treatment, one is ready to sacrifice everything to maintain his rights and lower the pride of those who humiliate him.

Mounier, calm in the midst of his indignation, then had a really great idea. After having represented to us how strange it was to see the hall of the States General filled with armed men, and we, the National Assembly, at the door, exposed to the insulting laughter of the nobility and their lackeys, forced to take refuge in the hall of the games so that our work might not be interrupted, he cried that it was the plain intention of the other orders to wound our dignity, that this warned us of all the passion, intrigue, and fury with which they were trying to force our good king to disastrous measures, and that, in this situation, the representatives of the nation had but one thing to do: 'to unite together by a solemn oath for the public good and the interests of the fatherland.'

This proposition, you may well imagine, aroused extraordinary enthusiasm. Each understood that the union of brave people would be a terror to the rogues and we immediately adopted the following resolution:

"The National Assembly, in consideration of the fact that it has been summoned to settle upon the constitution for the kingdom, to bring about the regeneration of public order, and maintain the true principles of the monarchy, nothing can prevent it from continuing its deliberations in whatever place it may be compelled to establish itself; in a word, wherever its members are gathered, there is the National Assembly.

"Resolved, that all the members assembled shall immediately take a solemn oath never to separate themselves, and to assemble wherever circumstances may make it necessary, until the constitution of the kingdom shall have been established on a firm and solid basis, and that said oath having been taken, all the members and every one in particular, shall confirm their unalterable resolution by the signing of their names."

How happy you would have been, Master Jean, if you had seen us in that great dark hall, we in the middle, the people around us, to hear the great hum of astonishment, of joy, and of enthusiasm, and the president, Bailly, standing up on a chair, reading us the formula of the oath, amid a religious silence, and then our hundreds of voices bursting out like a clap of thunder in the old building: "We swear it! We swear it!"

Our ancestors who have been made to suffer so much must have stirred in their graves. I am not a tender man, but every drop of my blood was joyful. Never in the world could I believe that such happiness could come to me. Beside me the Curé Jacques was weeping. Gérard and de Vic were pale. Suddenly we all fell into one another's arms. Outside, the acclamations spread over the whole city, and it was there that I remembered the verse from the Gospels, when the soul of Christ ascended to heaven, "And the earth trembled and the veil of the temple was rent!"

When order had been established, every one in turn approached the table, repeated the oath which the secretary wrote down, and made him sign. I never put down

my name with so much pleasure. I laughed as I signed, and at the same time I could have wept. Ah, the great day!

A single deputy, Martin Auch, of Castelnau-dary, signed under protest. Valentine will be delighted to know that he is not the only one of his species in France, and that there is another child of the people who loves the nobles better than his own race. There are two of them.

The protest of Martin Auch was put on record. As a number proposed to send a deputation to His Majesty to present to the king our deep grief, etc., the Assembly adjourned until Monday the 22d at the usual hour, resolving, besides, that if the royal session was still being held in the Menus Hall, all the members of the Third Estate would remain after the session to attend to their own affairs, which were those of the nation. We broke up at about six o'clock.

When the Count d'Artois heard what had taken place, he was surprised that one could deliberate in the hall of games, and hastened to rent it for the 22d for the purpose of amusing himself. The poor prince, this time he was sure that we would not know where to turn.

The following day the king sent word to let us know that the session would not take place on the 22d, but on the 23d. This was prolonging our agony. But, alas! those profound minds had not conceived that there existed in Versailles other places than the hall of games and the Menus Hall. So that on the 22d, as we found the doors of both these halls closed, the Assembly went first to the Récollets Chapel, which did not prove large enough, and then to the Church of Saint Louis, where every one found himself at his ease.

Thus the magnificent plan of the Count d'Artois and the Princes of Condé and Conti fell through. Goodness, one cannot think of everything! Who could have imagined that any one would go to the Church of Saint Louis! Or that the clergy itself would join us there! And yet,

Master Jean, these are the great men who have held us in subjection for these many centuries. It is easy to see that our own ignorance was to blame for all that, and that we really cannot reproach them. Simple Jeannette Paramel of Baraques, with her big throat, has more wit than they.

At about noon-time Monsieur Bailly announced to us he had received word that the majority of the clergy were to come to the Assembly to legalize their rights with us. The court knew it from the 19th, and it was to prevent this union that the doors of the Menus Hall had been closed to us, and that a royal session was being prepared.

At first the clergy assembled in the choir of the church, but subsequently they joined us in the nave. There another touching scene took place. The curés had drawn in their bishops, and in most cases the bishops themselves had come to their senses. A single ecclesiastic, the Abbé Maury, the son of a shoemaker, from Comtat-Venaissin, felt himself wounded in his dignity, in being reckoned among the deputies of the Third Estate. One sees such singular things in the world.

In spite of that abbé, however, the most opposed of his order to the reunion, documents were read, speeches were made, and compliments exchanged. Then the session adjourned to meet again on the following day, Tuesday, at nine o'clock, in the usual place—in the Menus Hall. So we come to the 23d, the day of the royal session.

In the morning, as I opened the shutters, I saw that we were going to have abominable weather. It was not raining yet, but the sky was all gray. That did not prevent the streets from being crowded with people. A few moments later Père Gérard came up for breakfast, and then the Curé Jacques. We were in costumes of ceremony, as on the first day of our reunion. What did this royal session mean? What had they to say to us? Since the day before we knew that the Swiss and the French guards were under arms. The report had also spread that



six regiments were advancing upon Versailles. While at breakfast we heard the patrols marching up and down Saint-François Street. Gérard thought that something bad was being planned, a sort of *coup d'état*, as they say, to force us to vote the money, and then send us back home again.

The Curé Jacques said that would be really equivalent to demanding our money or our lives, and that the king was not capable of doing such a thing, in spite of his affection for the queen and the Count d'Artois; that he would never consent to it. I thought as he did. But as to what was his purpose in holding the royal session, I was not a bit better off than the others. However, the idea kept coming to me that he wished to make us fear. Soon we were to know what was in store for us.

At nine o'clock we separated. All the streets leading to the hall of the States General were already crowded with people. The patrols marched to and fro. People of every sort, bourgeois, workmen, and soldiers, seemed uneasy. Every one felt something evil was about to happen.

At the moment we approached the hall it began to rain, the shower could not hold off any longer. I was in front and hastened. A hundred of the deputies of the Third Estate were standing before the door, at the great avenue entrance. They were not permitted to enter, while the nobles and the clergy passed in without any hindrance. When I arrived, some of those lackeys came to prevent the gentlemen of the Third Estate from entering from Chantier Street; so that there might be no crowding or confusion. Monsieur the Marquis de Brézé, who had had all the trouble of getting every one in the proper order at the first session of the States General, had taken this precaution of his own accord, I suppose.

Our anger got the better of us. In spite of this, as the rain began to fall steadily, we hurried to reach the Chantier door, thinking that it was open. But Monsieur the Marquis had not yet succeeded in placing the other

two orders according to his ideas, and so this rear door also was closed. We had to run under a sort of shed to the left, while the nobles and the bishops entered squarely and with dignity by the broad Avenue de Paris. Monsieur the Grand Master of Ceremonies had not permitted himself to be inconvenienced by us; it seemed quite the thing to make us wait. We were only there as a matter of form, because we had to be. What are the representatives of the people? What is the Third Estate? Is it not rabble? Such undoubtedly were the thoughts of Monsieur the Marquis, and if the peasants and the bourgeois like myself found difficulty in swallowing such affronts, offered us each day by some new kind of underling, you can imagine the fury of a nobleman like Mirabeau. His hair stood up on his head and his great cheeks fairly trembled with anger. It was pelting rain. When our president had been sent back twice, as Monsieur the Marquis still had some of the great personages to place, Mirabeau, seeing this, pointed to the Third Estate and cried to Bailly in a terrible voice, "Monsieur President, lead the representatives of the people into the presence of the king!"

Finally, for the third time, Bailly approached the door and knocked. Monsieur the Marquis condescended to appear, after having concluded his noble work. This gentleman, Master Jean, could boast of having well served the court. The president told him that, if the door were not opened, the Third Estate would retire. Then it was opened wide. We entered the hall, which was furnished as on the first day. The benches of the nobility and the clergy were graced by these noble orders. As for us, we entered dripping with rain. The gentlemen of the nobility and some of the bishops laughed as we took our seats. They seemed to be quite happy at our humiliation. These things, however, cost them dear.

Then we seated ourselves, and almost immediately the king entered from the other side of the hall, surrounded by the princes of the blood, the dukes, two by two, the

captains of the guards, and some of the body guard itself. Not a single cry of "Long live the king!" came from our side. Silence fell at once, and the king said that "he believed he had done everything for the good of his people, that it seemed to him that we had not finished his work, but that in two months we had only really begun our labors, and that he himself must now put an end to these unfortunate divisions. And so he was going to declare to us his wishes." After this speech the king seated himself and the secretary of the Estates read to us His Majesty's will:

"Art. I.—The king wishes that the former distinction into three orders be preserved absolutely, and that they form three separate chambers. He declares null the deliberations of the Third Estate on the 17th of the present month.

"Art. II.—His Majesty declares the rights valid, legalized or not legalized, in each chamber, and orders that they be permitted to communicate each order with the other, without hindrance.

"Art. III.—The king breaks and annuls the restrictions which have been put upon the rights of the deputies."

At this rate, any one of us could do as he pleased, grant pensions, vote imposts, alienate the rights of the nation, etc., without troubling himself about the will of those who had sent him.

"Arts. IV-V.—If the deputies have been rash enough to take an oath to remain faithful to their mandate, the king permits them to write to their constituents to be relieved; but they must remain at their post while waiting, in order to give weight to the decisions of the States General.

"Art. VI.—His Majesty declares that, in all future sessions of the States General, he will not permit any imperative mandates."

Without doubt the rogues who sell their votes would be too easily recognized among honest men who fulfil their obligations.

Then His Majesty signified to us the manner in which he wished us to proceed. First, he forbade us in the future to treat of affairs concerning the long-established rights of the three orders; of any form of constitution to be adopted at the approaching States General; of the feudal and manorial estates; of the rights and honorary prerogatives of the first two orders. His Majesty also declared that the special consent of the clergy would be necessary in all matters pertaining to religion, to ecclesiastical discipline, and to the administration of the regular and secular orders. In a word, Master Jean, we were only convened to pay the deficit and vote that the people should furnish the money. The rest was none of our business. Everything was all right, very much so. Everything would remain as it was after we had attended to the finances.

After the reading of this document, the king arose to tell us that never had monarch done as much as he in the interest of his people, and that those who would obstruct his paternal intentions would be unworthy of the name of Frenchmen. Then he sat down, and his wishes concerning imposts and loans and other financial affairs were read to us.

The king wished to change the name of the imposts. You understand, Master Jean, the name. In this manner the general tax of the "twentieth," or the same imposed in another way, would be easier to pay; instead of paying one franc, we would pay twenty sous [the exact equivalent], instead of handing the money to the tax-collector, we would turn it over to the tax-gatherer—and the people would be much relieved. Never had king done so much for his people. He wished to abolish the letters de cachet, while preserving them, nevertheless, to sustain the honor of the families. This is clear. He wanted the liberty of the press, but he took the greatest care to prevent "pernicious" books and journals from being published. He wanted the consent of the States General to raise loans; only, in case of war, he declared he would

reserve to himself the right to raise a loan of even one hundred millions, to begin with, "for the formal intention of the king is never to place the salvation of his kingdom at the mercy of any one's individual will." He also wished to consult us regarding offices and functions which, in the future, would affirm the privilege of conferring and transmitting titles of nobility. In short, a grand potpourri on all sorts of things upon which they wished to consult us was read. The king, meanwhile, reserved the right to do what he pleased. Our business was to pay. In this matter we always had the preference.

His Majesty again arose to speak, and said to us:

✓ "Reflect, gentlemen, that none of your projects, none of your propositions, can have any valid claim before the law without my special approbation. I am the natural guarantor of your rights. It is I who make the happiness of my people, and it is rare, perhaps, that the ambition of the sovereign should be to secure from his subjects their agreement to accept his benefits. I command you, gentlemen, to disperse at once and to gather again to-morrow morning, each in the chamber set apart for your order, to continue the sessions."

At last we had been put in our places. They had made us come to vote the funds and that was all. Without the declaration of the Parliament, that all the imposts had been illegally collected up to the present time, never would the thought of convening the States General have entered our good king's head. But at present the States General were more trying than Parliament. And we were ordered about like a lot of lackeys. "I command you to disperse at once."

The bishops, the marquises, the counts, and the barons were enjoying our confusion, and were looking at us from their height. But, believe me, Master Jean, we did not stand there with downcast eyes. We felt within ourselves a terrible seething.

The king, without adding another word, arose, and went away as he had come. Almost all the bishops, a

number of the curés, and the majority of the deputies of the nobles retired through the large gate by way of the avenue, while we had to go out through the little door on Chantier Street. But for the time being we remained in our places. Every one was reflecting, every one gathering strength and wrath. This lasted for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then Mirabeau arose, his big head thrown back and his eyes blazing. The silence was terrible. We were all gazing at him. Suddenly, in his clear voice, he said:

"Gentlemen, I confess that what we have just heard might be the salvation of the country if the presents of despotism were not always dangerous things. What is this insulting dictatorship, this exhibition of armed men, this violation of the nation's temple in order to command you to be happy?"

Every one was quivering with excitement. We all understood that Mirabeau was risking his head. He knew it as well as we did, but indignation had gotten the better of him, and his face was all changed. It was beautiful, Master Jean. For he who risks his life to attack injustice is beautiful, is even the most beautiful thing in the world. He continued:

"Who has given you this commandment? He who should carry out your will. Who gives you imperious orders? Again he who should do your will. He who should receive them from us, gentlemen, who are invested with the inviolate authority of a political priesthood. From us, in short, alone, upon whom the happiness of twenty-five million people depends. For it must be approved, given, and received by all!"

Every word was like a bomb against the old throne of absolutism.

"But the freedom of your deliberations has been interfered with," he began again, with a gesture that made us tremble. "A military force is surrounding the States General. Where are the enemies of our country? Is Cataline at our doors? I adjure you to wrap yourselves

in the dignity of your legislative power. Shut yourselves within the sanctity of your oath, which does not permit you to disperse before you have drawn up the constitution."

While he was talking the master of ceremonies, who had followed the king, had reëntered the hall, and was advancing, with his plumed hat in his hand, in the direction of the empty seats which the nobility had just occupied. Barely had Mirabeau ceased speaking when he said a few words, but as no one understood him, a number cried with ill humor, "Louder! Louder!" Then, raising his voice amid the silence, he cried, "Gentlemen, you have heard the command of the king!"

Mirabeau had remained standing. I saw that anger and contempt were making his great jaws rigid. "Yes, Monsieur," he answered, slowly, in the tone of a great lord who speaks from his height, "we have heard the intentions that have been suggested to the king, and you who could hardly be his mouthpiece before the States General, you who have here neither place nor right to speak, you are not the person to remind us of his discourse." Then, straightening himself up, and measuring the master of ceremonies from head to foot, "However," he said, "to avoid all delay or misunderstanding, I declare that, if you have been charged with compelling us to leave this place, you will have to ask permission to employ force. For we will not go from this hall except at the point of the bayonet."

All the Assembly arose as one man, shouting, "Yes, yes!" There was an extraordinary tumult. After two or three minutes, when a little quiet had been reëstablished, our president said to the master of ceremonies, "The Assembly decided yesterday that it would remain in session after the royal session. I cannot break up the Assembly before it has deliberated and deliberated freely."

"Am I to carry this answer to the king?" asked the marquis.

"Yes, Monsieur," answered the president.

Then the master of ceremonies retired and the session was continued.

To tell you the truth, Master Jean, we were waiting for something serious to happen. But, at about two o'clock, instead of bayonets, we saw a lot of carpenters who had been sent to take away the royal platform, and who set about their task immediately. This was another scheme of the queen and the Count d'Artois, who, not daring to employ force, used noise. Has one ever seen anything so despicable?

This new outrage, you must know, did not prevent us from doing our duty. The discussion continued amid the hammering, and the workmen themselves, astonished at our indifference, ended by laying down their tools and coming down the steps of the platform to listen to what was being said. If Monsieur the Count d'Artois could have seen them standing there until the end of the session, more attentive than if they had been at church, and drowning the voices of the orators with applause whenever they said anything strong and just, he would have understood that the people are not such fools as some folks are fond of believing.

Camus, Barnave, and Sieyès spoke. Sieyès said, as he came down from the tribune, "You are to-day what you were yesterday." It was a rising vote and the National Assembly declared unanimously that it would adhere to its preceding resolutions. Finally, Mirabeau, whose anger had had time to cool, and who saw clearly that his head was at stake, said:

"It is to-day that I bless liberty for ripening such beautiful fruit as the National Assembly. Let us strengthen our work, and declare inviolable the persons of the deputies of the States General. It is not a manifestation of fear. It is simply acting with prudence. It is putting a barrier against the violent councils which assail the throne."

Every one saw the finesse of the thing, and the motion was carried by a vote of 493 to 34. The Assembly broke



up at six o'clock, after having passed the following resolution:

"The National Assembly declares that the person of each deputy is inviolable, that every individual, corporation, tribunal, court, or commission which might dare during or after this present session, to search, persecute, arrest, or cause to be arrested, detain, or cause to be detained, a deputy for any proposition, advice, opinion, or speech at the States General, as well as any one who should aid in any of the said prosecutions, no matter from what authority the order proceeded, is guilty of infamy and treason against the nation, and adjudged to have committed capital crimes. The National Assembly resolves that it will take all necessary measures to prosecute and punish those who might be the perpetrators, the instigators, and the agents."

Mirabeau had no longer anything to fear, neither had we. If kings are sacred, it is because they have taken care, as we did, to write it down in the laws. It is always a good thing to be sacred. If any one were to touch a single one of our hairs now, the whole of France would cry out and be terribly indignant. We ought to have begun in that way, but good ideas do not all come at once.

Upon the whole, I think the court was right in not pushing things too far. During the whole time we were in session, on the 23d, the people filled the avenues of Versailles, and those who came in and went out were continually carrying news to them. They knew all that was going on in the Assembly every fifteen minutes, and if we had been attacked we would have had the whole nation on our side.

At the same time the news spread that Necker had been dismissed and the Count d'Artois put in his place. So that, as soon as our session was closed, the people ran toward the palace. Of the French guard, which had received the order to fire, not one stirred. The mob entered even into the apartments of Necker, and it was

only when they heard from the minister himself that he would remain that they consented to retire.

In Paris the exasperation was even greater. I have been told that when the news spread that the king had broken up everything, one could feel the fire smouldering under the pavements, and one sign would have been enough to light the flames of civil war.

It must have been true, for, despite the counsel of the princes, despite the regiments of German and Swiss mercenaries which had been brought from the four corners of France, despite the cannon which had been posted in the stables of the queen, opposite the hall of the States General, and whose mouths we could see from the windows, despite what the king himself had ordered us, he wrote to the deputies of the nobility to join the deputies of the Third Estate in the hall of the commune. On the 30th of June, which was yesterday, we saw "the proud descendants of the conquerors" come and sit beside "the humble posterity of the vanquished." They no longer laughed as on the morning of the 23d, when they saw us enter the hall drenched with rain.

This, Master Jean, is as far as we have gone. The first game is won, and we are now going to draw up the constitution. It will be a difficult task, but we will take all the time necessary to do it. Besides, our memorials are here to guide us. All we have to do will be to follow them.

All the complaints, all the wishes of the people, must enter into the constitution. "The abolition of the feudal laws, of the corvées, the gabelles, the internal revenue taxes, equality of imposts and before the law, safety of the person, admission of all citizens to all military and civil employments, inviolability of the mails, legislative power reserved to the representatives of the nation, responsibility of agents in power, uniformity in the legislation and administration of weights and measures, free instruction and justice, equal division of property between children, liberty of commerce, industry, and labor." In

a word, everything, everything must be there, clearly presented in proper order by chapter, so that every one can understand, and that the simplest of the peasants may know his rights and his duties. Rest assured, my friends, men will long remember the year 1789.

This is all I have to say to you to-day. Try to give me news of yourselves as soon as possible. We want to know what is going on in the provinces. My colleagues are better informed than I am. Tell Michel to spare us an hour every day after his work, to let me know what is happening in Baraques and its neighborhood. Let him send the packet at the end of every month. In this way we will always be together as we used to be, and it will seem as though we were speaking to one another in the chimney corner.

I close embracing you all. Marguerite asks me to tell you not to forget her, as she does not forget you. Well, once more I embrace you.

Your friend,  
CHAUVEL.

While I was reading this letter Master Jean, the big Materne, and the Curé Christopher were looking at one another in silence. A few months before, had any one spoken so of the king, the queen, the court, and the bishops, he would have been sent to the galleys till the end of his days. But things change so quickly in this world when the time has come, and what one thought abominable becomes natural. When I had finished reading, those who were there remained in silence. At the end of a moment or two Master Jean exclaimed, "Well, what do you think of this, Christopher? What do you think? They have not used gloves in this matter!"

"No," answered the curé, "they no longer use gloves for anything! And that a man as prudent as Chauvel should write with such ink is the best proof that the

